Caius Gracchus

by

ODIN GREGORY

with

An Introduction

by

THEODORE DREISER

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Caius Gracchus

A Tragedy

By

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With

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If the story of this great heart, and its martyrdom, seems strangely familiar, bear in mind that the philosophy the Nazarene taught was new to the Jews only

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Introduction

FOR three centuries, the English metric drama has remained sterile of any notable production. It may well be that Shakespere set a standard too high for any other mortal to attain, even in the ages to come. Certain it is that the efforts of Massinger, of Marlowe, of Ben Jonson, of Beaumont, of Fletcher, of Middleton, and of all the others of that brilliant galaxy of the Elizabethan period, carried no appeal to the generations that followed. The very titles of their great plays, such as "Tamburlaine," "The Jew of Malta," "Duke of Milan," "The Fatal Dowry," "The Maid of the Inn," "The Fall of Sejanus," "Volpone," sound strange in modern ears.

In France, the works of Racine, of Molière, of Corneille and of Voltaire continue a splendid history, to which Hugo and Rostand added no mean measure of lustre. The Italian revival may be continued down to the Eighteenth Century, when it produced the simple intensity of Alfieri. In the literature of Germany, Schiller, Goethe and Hauptmann made the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries glorious.

But in the English language, the actor-manager-playwright from Stratford stands by himself—a very Colossus of the ages. He marks the beginning, and, thus far, the end, of the influence of the Renaissance on our poetic drama. The great Greek poets laid the foundation of the harmonic expression of thought and action. And there is, in our language, no surviving

personality whose plays affirmatively force our attention, between their time, and the day of Shakespere—nor since. It may be that the day of the exact and exalted poetic drama, whatever its inherent literary or social value, has gone. Life may have adjusted its ends permanently to a different arrangement or beat of thought. Admitting, for argument's sake, that the Rabelaisian productions of Massinger, Marlowe and Ben Jonson failed to hold the popular attention for the same reason that Shakespere's "Pericles," and the doubtful "Titus Andronicus" failed to hold it, still the ultimate fact remains that a few plays of Shakespere's constitute practically the whole of our heritage of poetic drama or important tragedy as known and given public attention today.

The critics, the self-avowed "experts," the expounders, and the textwriters, all tell us that the Elizabethan cult is very dead. They join in assuring the would-be venturer into the field of metric drama that he is chasing the proverbial undomesticated goose; that every one who has tried his hand at the game has had nothing but his frenzy for his effort.

Certain facts may, perhaps, seem to justify those solemn warnings. The ambitious essays into dramatic poetry of yesterday—where are they? True—Bulwer Lytton's "Richelieu" is still occasionally played, by our persistent tragedians. Stephen Phillips did his best in "Herod;" his style was even hailed by some of our professional wiseacres as being a wonderful new product. But the public displayed no enthusiasm: not even mild interest. So, Phillips' wan work died. Had he written less for the critics, and more for the people, he might have achieved real results.

In my view, the reason why great dramatic poems have failed to gain attention since the Seventeenth Century, is that no one writing our language metrically has had anything to say that the English-speaking people cared to hear, or, having anything to say, has had the courage, the talent or the genius to say it in such fashion as to compel public attention. This

regrettable condition also applies, in great measure, to the prose drama. Eliminate Sheridan's works, and what English play is there that has survived the test of even a century?

But why does this condition maintain?

The answer suggests itself.

Puritanism—the inspiration of the period of Oliver Cromwell—dedicated itself to the murder of the soul of English poetry, by the unsparing use of cant. The effect of this drab poison continued through the Restoration. It crossed the Atlantic with the Pilgrims, and it is with us today. It was inevitable that thereafter English genius, when it did manifest itself, should do so in the ode rather than in the sonnet. We had Milton in the middle of the Seventeenth Century. And then—we had Bunyan. Cant, regnant and triumphant, held aloft the whining church hymn as the greatest thing in poesy; and a people blinded by its own dust-throwing, celebrated the extinction of free literature as a great moral victory.

It is the fashion of the day for the literary censors to decry the decadence of English letters. They bewail the utter banality of "best sellers," and sometimes almost shed tears because no one is essaying real "literature." All of which is quite touching. But woe to the unfortunate who takes any of this seriously, and addresses himself to letters for art's sake. Moved by that splenetic resentment on which both Pope and Byron had occasion to comment, they are immediately upon him with such outpourings of venom as small minds have always found useful to conceal their own vapidness—or prostitution.

Into this situation, a new author intrudes, with his offering of a tragedy, in the classic style. The venture calls for courage.

We open the book with, say, tolerance. And what do we find in its pages?

A dramatic work that breathes questions, thoughts, perplexities, struggles that are as old as humanity. The writer, we soon discover, is no maudlin sentimentalist.

Essaying the Roman world, and an interpretation of the humanist mood, he sees pleb and patrician, courtesan and lady, slave and lord, in the true relation of each to the other.

And he paints them as he sees them. He refuses to believe that the province of literature, or of poetry, is to deal only with piffle. He refuses to accept the dictum of the "authorities" that the mission of modern literature is to serve as a sort of sublimated "movie." His characters are no mere lay figures, induced to action by the more or less artful, but always obvious, pulling of strings. Each of his personages lives, breathes and moves as do the men and women of our own time. It is refreshing to note that the play is not propaganda. The temptation to subvert the Muse to such purposes is very strong. Even the "Divina Commedia," we are told, was written in support of a political faction, and the "Furies" of Æschylus, to which I shall refer later on, was worked out to bolster up the Areopagus.

But in the present case, the author simply shows us the human mass—high, low and middling—as it is, and invites us to take our choice. He is the painter, not the advocate.

In saying the foregoing, I do not wish to be taken as missing the point that throughout the volume there runs a note of passionate insistence on the sanctity of Law, and on the inevitableness of its ultimate triumph: it is too patent to require expatiation. But this basic strain is one of philosophic conviction—not of argument.

In reading the work, we soon become conscious that the author writes of the *Roman* Rome of the period covered by the play. It is not an English Rome, or an American Rome. Almost every page, bears evidence of study, of classic accuracy. We are not offended by anachronisms. Even the master of Avon sometimes failed in this particular. When Venus pleads with Adonis, it is a buxom Englishwoman of the middle class who is entreating an Eton youth: and the scene is that of an English middle-counties countryside. When Brutus confers with the conspirators, when Cleopatra exchanges

compliments with Antony, we are uncomfortably conscious of an all-English atmosphere. True, the Shakesperian genius rose superior to these minutiae. But that is no reason why we should not welcome one who writes of Rome in the second century before Christ as it then was, and as its thoughts, its manners and its customs then were.

The present volume shows, in its every line, that it is the work of a man who has something to say, and who says it well. When he touches on economics, he speaks with authority. Having chosen the iambic pentameter as his medium, the author convinces us that he is master of the art of being stately, without being stilted. Not for an instant do his characters step out of the picture. There is neither overdrawing, nor underdrawing. We come to understand every individual almost immediately after his, or her, introduction. Throughout, Odin Gregory shows an exquisite and precise sense of values. By this I mean values of words and style, as well as values of situation and action. When one of his characters is drawn into what may be called "rhetoric," the action itself has been such as to make rhetoric acceptable. In the fifth act, the mingling of the real with the unreal, of the supernatural and the phantastic with the commonplace, is so delicately handled, that the eerie is no longer so. The progress of Gracchus to the state of exaltation in despondency that must precede the peremptory order to the soldier to administer the death-blow, constitutes a study in psychology that has not been surpassed in any of the imaginative writing with which I am familiar.

Of the structural quality of the work, it may be said that the author has brought the spirit of the Elizabethan verse to the Twentieth Century. Odin Gregory is a classicist. His inspiration is plainly that of Spenser, Shakespere, Jonson and Dryden, not uninfluenced by the refinement of Pope. But his language is that of the present day, skilfully applied to the uses of the second person singular, and to the atmosphere required in an epic. The simplicity of the style is that of the

Greek masters. There is a gentle transition from mere melody to what I might call orchestral effect, as the action requires it, and the reader is carried along in pleasurable sympathy. After the reader's attention has become engaged by the first few pages, it can not slacken. The story itself *lives*. The action intensifies. The blank verse deters us not at all. It merely makes the reading more succulent. And, curiously enough, we hunt for the long speeches, instead of skipping them.

I shall not attempt any analysis of the prosody of this work. There are various college professors who claim to have reduced the theory and practice of poetry-writing to a series of formulae. Perhaps this can be done, but I can not see it. But I do see this: that in the present instance, the poet has written verse that any one can read without hiring an interpreter. It is the kind of verse that delights the eye, and is pleasant to the ear.

The conception of the Furies, in Act V, must inevitably elicit comparison with the Eumenides of Æschylus. I think that Odin Gregory has succeeded in visualizing for us these daughters of the Night as no one has done before. In Æschylus, the personalities of the Three Furies are lost in the chorus of the whole. Here, we have the three spirits individualized, each functioning in her respective activities with a convincing vividness.

In its present shape, the tragedy is, of course, too long for stage presentation. But it is so written that its preparation for the theater is merely a matter of mechanical excision. I lay no claim to the gift of prophesy, but I venture the opinion that if properly presented, it will draw English-speaking audiences as no serious play of recent years has drawn them.

Odin Gregory has never before courted publicity for his verse. He says he has been writing for his own joy. I have had the privilege of reading some of his unpublished material. It ranges from madrigals to meditations, from sonnets to serenades. Those who love graceful word-painting may look forward to exquisite pleasure when those writings are released to the printer.

My final word is that an important, and a virile figure has appeared in English letters. His work is Art, because it is Truth. It is one of the really notable contributions to the English literature of the last three centuries. With this first Tragedy as an earnest, we may look forward to great things from him in the future, if the inspiration of his pen does not fail. But if he never writes another line, he should live in English poetry by virtue of the intrinsic value of his " Caius Gracchus."

THEODORE DREISER.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Preface

TIBERIUS GRACCHUS and Caius Gracchus were the sons of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, twice Consul of Rome. Their mother, Cornelia, was the daughter of the great Scipio, conqueror of Carthage. The elder brother devoted himself to the interests of the common people—the plebs—and when about to be elected Tribune for a second term, was foully murdered by a mob of Senators—patricians.

The younger brother, Caius, served with honor in various foreign missions. He early commended himself to the love of the people by his actions as *quaestor* in Sardinia. His honesty, his idealism, and his energetic work in behalf of the commons, aroused the hostility of the men of the " upper class," who did everything in their power to prove him dishonest, corrupt, etc. He was twice elected Tribune, and distinguished himself by building magnificent roads, and other necessary public works, throughout Roman Italy. He fathered legislation that called for the return to the State, by the very wealthy, of common lands, which the latter had illegally appropriated, and for its distribution to the landless; for the regulation of the price of corn; for the raising of the minimum military age to seventeen; for the furnishing of clothing to soldiers at public expense; for the enlargement of the jury list, so as to include therein certain of the middle class citizens, and for the founding of foreign colonies. All these activities infuriated the patricians, as tending to impair

their powers, their special privileges, and their incomes.

To lessen the intense affection of the common people for Caius, his enemies arranged with one Drusus to play the role of pretended champion of the poor. Drusus was a man of high lineage. He had himself elected a Tribune, and undermined Gracchus by sponsoring the most fantastic laws in favor of the populace, always assuring the latter that he was doing this at the behest of the Senate.

The time having come for Gracchus to seek election for a third term as Tribune, a combination was formed against him, and, through the treachery of Drusus, he was fraudulently declared defeated. This deprived him of the cloak of sacrosanctity, that protected Tribunes while in office.

As soon as they rid themselves of Gracchus as a Tribune, the patricians commenced to cancel the laws he had caused to be enacted. Issue was finally joined between the Gracchan partisans and their opponents on two measures. One had to do with the founding of a Roman colony on the site of what had once been Carthage; the other concerned the admission to the voting privilege of the Italian allies of Rome. Gracchus had sponsored both these propositions.

The patricians had recourse to legalistic trickery. They cleared Rome of many Italians who were entitled to vote—and who were adherents of Gracchus—by arbitrarily ordering out of the city all citizens thereof who had not been *born* within its boundaries. Then they called a public assembly to pass on the proposal to cancel the "Rubrian Law," which had authorized the location of a new city on the Carthaginian site, under the name "Junonia." The pious patricians claimed that the augurs had declared the venture inauspicious. The fact was, that the founding of new colonies tended to create independent husbandmen, and to decrease the numbers of those destitute citizens on whose grossly underpaid labor, and tribute of extortionate prices for food, the ruling class depended for its enormous gains.

Despite the fact that Gracchus was now a private citizen, it was not at all certain that the patricians would prevail. The killing, in the Forum, of Antyllius, a lictor, while he was carrying the entrails of the sacrifice, gave the patricians and Senators a pretext for raising the cry of " sacrilege." They did so, and called on all good Romans to rally around the government, for the safety of the Republic, and in protection of *Religion*.

They had already excited the stodgy populace to a condition of apprehensive receptivity, by virtuously advertising danger to the country from the " aliens. " An outcry against " foreign devils " was as efficacious in arousing the fury of the stupid low and middle class Romans in B. C. 121, as it was many centuries later in stirring the hatred of the brutishly dull coolies of China, —and of their intellectual mates elsewhere. The patricians and the politicians had skilfully played on the passions of the brainless by flinging the charges of *treason* and *sedition* against all those who sought to put an end to their private and public plundering. The fatuous, degenerate descendants of a once sturdy yeoman race, who had become capable of only a limited set of emotions, responded as was expected of them. They proudly, and joyously, and clamourously committed political and social suicide. They deserted Gracchus. The Republic was declared in danger. " Patriotic " citizens took control. Full power was vested in the Consul—Opimius—and the clever ruling class had its way with Gracchus, and with all those who had championed the cause of the common people. The soldiery, of course, obeyed orders, and butchered as directed.

In later years, the Romans came to realize, in part, the vileness of which they had been guilty. They honored the martyred brothers with statues, and with what amounted to deification. Their mother lived on for many years, honored by the people as the " *Mother of the Gracchi.*"

THE admirable character of Caius Gracchus may be summarized by saying that his was essentially a constructive mind. He was not one of those whose affection for a country is measured by what they can get out of it for themselves. He truly loved Rome, and gave to it the best there was in him, asking nothing in return but opportunity for greater service. He was not influenced by the theories of violence that so often carry away those whose sober sense of social values is overcome by waves of passionate rebellion against immediate wrong suffered, and oppression endured. He sturdily maintained that in a State in which the citizens can actually control the making of laws by exercising their rights of suffrage, effective social progress should be sought through legal media, and by the enforcement of Law against all alike.

Gracchus clearly saw the danger of class warfare, and sought to save his country from its baneful effects, by curbing the powers and prerogatives of the patricians, while enlarging the rights of the middle class, and of the plebeians. It may be taken for granted that he knew, as all thinking men have known, that the government of any people, in the last analysis, reflects the morals of the people themselves, and that the cure for immoral government lies not in pulling down all governments, but in raising the intellectual standards, the ideals, and the requirements of those who are governed. He was no stranger to the eternal truth that the remedy for social injustice lies not in destruction, but in limitation, and that those who would limit others must first be willing themselves to be limited.

To make possible the realization of his ideals by legislation, Caius Gracchus strove to extend the voting right to all those who acknowledged the sovereignty of Rome. His opponents, the patricians, were the anarchists of the period. Theirs was the most dangerous species of anarchy: that bred of the arrogance of conscious power. They had no respect for the lives,

the rights, or the properties of any other than themselves. Under cover of the shibboleth " law and order," they had recourse to the most atrocious crimes to attain their ends, and to maintain their mastery. Constantly inveighing against the horrors of mob rule, they incited or practised it—when they found it to their advantage to do so. According to them, mob violence, when resorted to by them, or in their interest, was sanctified and proper, while like force invoked by the commons, on their own behalf, was unholy and improper. What they could not obtain by craft, or by force, they gained by the shameless misuse of the judicial process, as well as of all the other instrumentalities of government. They drove Gracchus to his death, to prevent the extension of the voting right to the Italian peoples.

To him who examines Rome's internal history dispassionately, it soon becomes evident that the elimination of the two brothers—Tiberius and Caius—by the smug, viciously lawless ruling element of the Roman population, marked the beginning of the moral and national degeneration of Rome that grew apace as Rome expanded imperially, and that finally led to the complete extinction of the Romans as a nation and as a people.

June, 1920. ODIN GREGORY.

Dramatis Personæ

Caius Gracchus
M. Fulvius Flaccus, a partisan of Gracchus
Livius Drusus, a Tribune
Caius Fannius, Consul, B. C. 122
Rutilius, son of Caius Fannius
Lucius Opimius, Consul, B. C. 121
Quintus Antyllius, spy in employ of Fannius
Calpio, slave to Fannius
Philocrates, guard to Gracchus
Portinus, a freedman, in house of Gracchus
Septimuleius, a patrician
Pontifex Maximus
A Plebeian
A Citizen
A Soldier
Spirit of Tiberius Gracchus
Licinia, wife of Gracchus
Lydia, a courtesan
Helia, daughter of Antyllius
Old Woman
Tisiphone, the blood-avenger
Megaera, the denier
Alecta, the unceasing

Priests, Magistrates, Senators, Lictors, Soldiers, Citizens, Bacchantes, etc.

ACT I.

Atrium, house of Caius Gracchus, near the Forum.

ACT II.

Palace of Caius Fannius, on the Palatine Hill.

ACT III.

The Forum.

ACT IV.

Triclinium in Palace of Caius Fannius.

ACT V.

Scene 1—Grove of the Furies.

Scene 2—Road to Rome.

ACT I.

Atrium, House of Caius Gracchus

[At curtain, shout from without: "*Hail, Caius Gracchus!*"]

Phil.:
There sounds the heart of Rome!

Antyll.:
Tah! Heart of chaff!
If they had voted as they shout—

Phil.:
Small use to vote,
When Money does the counting.

Antyll.:
True: gold is gold—

Phil.:
Aye, and the mob 's a fool. If I—

Antyll.:
If thou—

Phil.:
If I had tongue, or art, to move that mass,
I 'd cry: " Away, to the accursèd hill,
And wring out from Capitoline by brawn
What hath been filched from you by brain! "

Antyll.:
Wouldst have—

Phil.:
The stolen public lands, fair price for food,
Our chosen Tribune, all our rights as men—

Antyll.:
So speaks lord Fulvius.

Phil.:
But Gracchus holds
We move by law.

Antyll.:

And thou—

Phil.:

I serve our chief.

[Enter PORTINUS]

Port.:

Antyllius!

Antyll.:

Portinus!

Port.:

I have brought
A message from thy daughter.

Antyll.:

Nothing 's ill?

Port.:

She cowers in gripping fear.

Antyll.:

Of what?

Port.:

A damned
Patrician youth, who 'th stationed slaves about,
To wait her coming out.

Antyll.:

His name?

Port.:

I begged it.
She denied me the hateful name, saying
He 's so exalted, she feared some vengeful stroke,
Born of mine anger, might back-lash me with death.
She urges cautious silence, and prays thee home
This even.

Antyll.:

And didst thou leave her thus: alone?

Port.:

I left two guards within, my friends, and gave
Alarm among the neighbors. I had staid,
But I was bound to hasten for our lord.

Antyll.:

I thank thee for thy service.

Port.:

I was thanked
By her request for service. I wait thy call.

[Exit PORTINUS to interior]

Antyll.:

My Helia! My girl! My little girl!
So soon in danger! Curse of impotence!
What can a mere plebeian soldier do?

Phil.:

Patrician men! The plunderers who rule our land!
How long will Romans bend the neck, and bear
The burden of their insolence, their blows,
Their robbery, their rape, their cunning—all
The horror of their lawless use of law?
Ah—if tomorrow we but win the day—

Antyll.:

What then?

Phil.:

Then is thy daughter safe.

Antyll.:

How so?

Phil.:

The law will rule alike for all in Rome,
And every man will be its chosen ward.

Antyll.:

Our master hath some project?

Phil.:

Nay, not he;
'T is Fulvius' plan. If by tomorrow's vote
'T is shown our master hath the people's trust,
Lord Fulvius will call them to arise,
And name our lord protector; they 'll enact decrees
To limit private fortunes, and to force
Quick restitution of the stolen lands.

Antyll.:

So Gracchus will be Consul?

Phil.:

That, and more:
For he 'll be clothed with power to give all laws
Fangs, claws, and sinews.

Antyll.:

Pray it may be so!
Then many Roman fathers of our class
Will taste tranquillity, when they are certain
They do not breed their daughters but to be
The offal of the golden beds of lust.

Phil.:

Hope for tomorrow.

Antyll.:

Hope? I hope, I hope.

Phil.:

But hast no faith?

Antyll.:

I 've seen our failures mount.

Phil.:

No matter. We shall win. The gods are just.
This youth—Portinus—loves thy little maid?

Antyll.:

His ears are pierced.

Phil.:

He 's free.

Antyll.:

A freedman. Tah!
Old Roman blood is not for erstwhile slaves.

Voice of Sept.: [*without*]
My life, mine arms, mine all, I gladly lend!
I follow thee, dear Gracchus, to the end!

Voice of Gracch.: [*without*]
Septimuleius: I thank thee. Thou art a friend
Of value.

Voice of Sept.: [*without*]
And what 's more, my friend, we 'll win!

[Enter SEPTIMULEIUS, from side]

Sept.:
My litter, men.
Phil.:
At once.
[Motions to ANTYLLIUS, who exits]
Forgive me, lord,
For this one question: doth the council break?
Sept.:
It breaks. Our chief comes out.
Phil.:
I thank thee, lord.
[Enter ANTYLLIUS]
Antyll.:
The litter, lord.
[Exit SEPTIMULEIUS]
Now, there 's the breed of man
I like. He 's noble, proud, erect; he hath
A dignity that flatters our old blood.
Phil.:
Our blood?
Antyll.:
He 's ancient Roman stock, as I.
Phil.:
I see him but a harbinger.
Antyll.:
Of what?
Phil.:
Of victory: although an old-time friend,
To-day 's the first he 'th joined in council here.
He hath a pointer's smell for what 's to come.
Antyll.:
Our master 's winning?
Phil.:
More! the spoils thereof.

[Several men, engaged in conversation, enter from side, and pass out toward ostium. Shouts without: "*Hail Caius Gracchus!*" "*Down, Fannius!*"]

Antyll.:

How? Fannius? Most strange! What gust of happy wind
Blows one so high to us?

Phil.:

So high, thou say'st?
Who is too high to seek to scrape the sill
Of Caius Gracchus' door?

Antyll.:

Have thee thy way;
But it were well we showed him due respect.

[Enter FANNIUS, CALPIO]

Hail, lord! Thy pleasure?

Fann.:

Soldier: I 'm in haste.
The noble Gracchus:—is he within?

Antyll.:

My lord—
Our master comes this instant. Pray, abide—

Fann.:

No more! Go say that Fannius awaits
In panting haste!

Antyll.: [*starts toward wing*]

At once—

Phil.: [*stops Antyllius*]

Stay! Those who seek
Our master, tarry here.

Fann.:

I 've said my will!

Phil.:

We serve but Gracchus here.

Fann.:

Thou insolent!

Phil.:

We serve but Gracchus here.

Fann.:

Speed as art bid!

Phil.:
We serve but Gracchus here!
[FANNIUS and CALPIO walk aside]

Fann.: [*aside, to Calpio, pointing to Philocrates*]
What of this man?

Calp.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
A dolt. We 've not his price.

Fann.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
Not gold?

Calp.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
Not gold—
Nor other bribes; both blandishments and coin,
Alike, fail to make impress on his ear.

Fann.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
He 's Roman?

Calp.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
No: a tribesman.

Fann.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
Savage men
Are often troubled by such streaks of faith.
[Points to ANTYLLIUS]
The other?

Calp.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
Serves us well since Gracchus lost
The Tribunate. He hath a merchant's soul.

Fann.: [*to Philocrates*]
I 'll wait no more!

Calp.: [*points to Antyllius*]
Good soldier, thou—

Antyll.:
I hear,
And I would gladly serve—

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Phil.:

Here I command:
Here those who seek my master rest, and wait.

Fann.:

I 'll have thee whipped! I 'll—

[Enter GRACCHUS, FULVIUS, followed by PORTINUS]

Fulv.:

Ho! Here 's noise of war!
Thrice welcome sound! What? Fannius, in arms?

Fann.:

Hail, Gracchus! Fulvius—I greet thee!

Fulv.:

Hail!
Thy wrath—?

Fann.:

'T is naught.

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]

Methinks our guest's red ire
Grows pale too fast.

Gracch.: [*to Fannius*]

I had not thought thy feet
Would find my threshold grateful to their beat;
Nor do I know what welcome to bestow,
Or if as friend, or if as foe—

Fann.:

My words
Are for thy private mind; wherefore, I pray
That but four ears attend on our two tongues.

Gracch.: [*to guards*]

Ye three, withdraw, and voice mine urgent prayer
To those without for patience for a little while.

[Exeunt PHILOCRATES, ANTYLLIUS, PORTINUS]

And now—

Fann.: [*points to Fulvius*]
One still remains—

Fulv.:
And do I vex,
Old comrade of a fairer morn? Methinks,
I knew a time when every man who stood
At Gracchus' elbow was the cherished love
Of Fannius, the beggar for men's votes.
But now, I vex—

Gracch.: [*to Fulvius*]
Peace!
[*to Fannius*]
Fannius: as once,
When thou hadst use of my poor art, didst pour
Thy cares, and fears, and hopes, into mine ear,
What time I waved away the Consul's rods*
To place them in thine eager hands; as then,
So now, my Fulvius holds all my faith;
For, see,—he changeth not.

Fulv.:
Mark! Changeth not!

Fann.:
Thy tone implies a grievance: thy words—
a blame.
Both are unjust. My presence here, this day,
Is witness to that latent love which, stirring,
Impels me—hard abused though I have been
By thine ungoverned tongue,—** to seek, in
grace,

---

* On the day of the general election, it was the expectation of all present that Caius Gracchus would ask for the office of Consul, and it was conceded that he could have the office if he wished it. Instead, he conducted Caius Fannius into the Campus Martius, and asked his friends to cast their votes for the latter for the higher office, Gracchus satisfying himself with re-election to the office of Tribune. Gracchus' support, of course, elected Fannius, who almost immediately thereafter showed himself in his true colors, as a supporter of the patricians, and an enemy of Gracchus.

** Gracchus having proposed certain of his laws, the population came from every part of Italy to vote for them. The patricians induced the Consul, Fannius, to command all persons who were not Romans *by birth*, even though they were citizens having the right to vote, to leave the City forthwith. Gracchus thereupon published articles of impeachment against Fannius, but the patricians prevailed, as they had the military power, and Gracchus could not bring himself to shed Roman blood.

Thy safety, Gracchus,—now a private man,—
Who, though no more made safe by vesti-
ture,*
Yet, with thy factious speech, still urgest to
war
The foolish, restless rabble at thy heel-straps;
The while, observant of thy lawless noise,
Up there, in council, in the Senate House,
Rome's greatest plan the scourging strokes,
by which
Shalt expiate all thine audacious deeds.

Fulv.:

Rome's greatest, say'st thou? Faugh! I almost
retch!
Rome's greatest? Nay, Rome's vilest is more
fitting!
Who are those "greatest," who, within the
walls
Of that old pesthouse,—hard-eyed, smug, and
sleek,—
Sit scheming on the punishment of him
Who dares espouse the cause of the oppressed?

Fann.:

Those are the old ones, sacrilegious man;
Those are the wise ones, those of ancient stock;
Those are ordained divinely, who, in line
That hath stretched on, unbroken, since the
days
When Romulus gave Rome her name and law,
Have toiled to make her mistress of the world.
Those are our greatest!

Fulv.:

So runs thy merry song,
Now that the crooked** chair adorns thy hall.
But I am mindful of those scarce-fled hours,

---

* Gracchus' term of office as Tribune expired December 10, B. C., 122. The attack on him and his laws commenced immediately thereafter.

** The chair of the magistrates—the Curula—was distinguished by its crooked, or turned, legs.

When, in thy fear lest, of their hate, thou lose
That fiercely craved-for bait of all thy dreaming,
Most loud wert thou of those who belched high streams
Of raging detestation of those men!

Gracch.:

Speak not of yesterday, for 't is as gone
As yester hundred years. What man hath said
Is nowise earnest of his speech to come . . . .
But 't is enough. Perhaps our old friend hastens
To bear us tidings of a better mind;
Speak, Fannius! Thy wish?

Fann.:

Dost question, man,
As if hadst aught to give, that I come seeking.
I came here, Caius Gracchus, from regard
Of other days, and from a wish to spare
Thy youthful years the ending that was wrought
To him who went before thee, in the pitted path
Thou now pursuest wildly. Heed! Heed well and heed!
Lest Caius join Tiberius in a death
Dealt suddenly, when Power hints the deed.

Gracch.:

Dost dare! Here, 'neath this roof, dost dare to bandy
My brother's name?

Fulv.:

O infamous!

Fann.:

Nay, nay:
I conjured it in deep concern for thee.

Fulv.:

Thou nimble, pliant, lying tongue!

Fann.: [*threateningly*]

Take heed!

Gracch.:
Let 's to the nub.
Fulv.:
The sword were best.
Fann.:
Perhaps—
Gracch.:
What wouldst thou urge?
Fann.:
This very day yield! Yield!
Go out to that unpleasing mob, and cry:
" Away! Disperse! Ye common-born, disperse!
Rome's masters are the men of substance, who
Have held their sway these many centuries.
Patricians, only, are divinely gifted
To shape Rome's various laws! So get you hence,
Or to your homes, or to your several tasks,
And on the morrow, at th' appointed hour,
When lord Opimius calls out the rolls,
Do as he bids you, for his mandate comes
Stamped with patrician shrewdness, and is wisely good! "
Do thus, and thou shalt live; but if, instead,
Still holdest fast to thy rebellious course,
Then will the rightful masters strike. I have
Betrayed a confidence to give thee warning.
What say'st thou?
Fulv.:
Let me speak
Gracch.:
No, not at all.
This matter is my body's, and my tongue's.
[Enter PHILOCRATES]
What now?
Phil.:
Forgive my trespass:—one awaits
Beyond the garden gate, who champs—
Gracch.:
His name?

Phil.:

I 'll whisper—

Gracch.:

Say it loud.

Phil.:

It is, my lord,
The Tribune Drusus.

Fulv.:

Drusus!

Gracch.:

He!

Fann.: [*aside*]

'T is time.

Phil.:

No less, who, heels a-wing, asserts he hath
A matter of importance for thine ear.

Fulv.:

Be absent to him, Caius! There 's no good
Within that foxlike head for thee, or thine.

Gracch.:

Thy counsel 's taken of thy fears, dear friend.
Nor pleasure, nor mine ease, incline in me
To hold or commerce, or debate, with that
Mean jackal of the Senate. Yet our place
Compels an open ear to all who speak.
A stinking breath may wing a precious thought,
And from the basest metals shrines are wrought.
Bring Drusus hither!

[Exit PHILOCRATES]

Fannius: thou stay on,
And make one of what grows a tribe-meet here.

[Enter, from side, DRUSUS, PHILOCRATES, ANTYLLIUS, PORTINUS. PHILOCRATES motions PORTINUS to ostium, to which PORTINUS exits. Thereafter, PORTINUS is seen from time to time, passing to and fro as outer guard]

Gracch.:
Hail Drusus!
Drusus:
Caius Gracchus: hail! And thou,
Good Fannius! Most strangely met!
Fann.:
But not
Inopportunely.
Fulv.:
Drusus sees me not.
Drus.:
I scarcely knew thee, for thy midnight scowl.
Fulv.:
My brow betrays the humor of my heart.
Gracch.:
Speak, Drusus! What 's the whip that drives thee thus
To ravish, stealthily, my postern door?
Drus.:
Fain had I hoped to find thee here alone,
Where of my kindness I might make thee rich.
Gracch.:
Thou make me rich?
Fulv.:
Ye patient gods!
Fann.: [*to Fulvius*]
Have done!
Drus.:
Know, Gracchus, I 'm thy friend.
Fulv.:
O evil news!
Gracch.:
Speak freely: name thy gift, and state its price.
Drus.:
I 'll speak thee fairly, Gracchus. At thy gates
A numerous rabble frets the pave, and waits
The index of thy pleasure at the poll
That, on the morrow, will decide the fate
Of those proposals which, in strict accord
With all the best of Roma's wisest planning,

The Consul will submit to general vote.
I know how dear the edict 's been to thee
To raise old Carthage from its greying dust;
Hast had thy dreams, I doubt not, and, we 're told,
'T is dreamers' deeds do honor to gods' promptings.
Yet have our Fathers sought the augurs' aid,
Who, guided by the Fates, advise the Senate thus:
" Accursed the land on which old Carthage stood;
Cursed are all those who on that land would brood."

Fulv.:

The augurs! Pah! The augurs!

Drus.:

Yea,—just those.
The augurs—

[Pauses, laughs softly]

They—or of them—

Gracch.:

Tell thy tale.

Drus.:

Still more offensive to all worthy men
Hath been thy measure granting the full vote
To all the Latins who accept our rule.
There was a folly! Cogitate! The sacred vote
To that mere buzzard's meat, which fights for us!

Gracch.:

They 're our allies!

Drus.:

Our battling brutes.

Opim.:

Ha—ha!
They 'll grant the vote to women next, or apes!

Fulv.:

This passeth patience!

Gracch.: [*to Fulvius*]
Stay!
[*to Drusus*]
Come, Drusus—end!

Drus.:
But greatest of thy follies is thy scheme
To take from noble families the lands
They 've held for many generations back.

Gracch.:
The lands they stole!

Drus.:
The lands they have. That 's all.
And having them, time hath confirmed their right.
Such is the law of wealth, however gotten.

Gracch.:
I 'll make that law a dust!

Drus.:
Nor thou, nor any man,
Nor now, nor any time, nor by whatever means.

Fulv.:
I have the means. 'T is here.
[Points to his arm]

Drus.: [*to Fulvius*]
I know thy ways.
[*turns to Gracchus*]
So, on the morn, our Fathers urge the tribes
To void thy laws, and Rubrius', alike.
Wherefore I come here, Gracchus, to beseech
That, moved by prudence—

Fulv.:
Prudence! The false name
Of cowardice!

Drus.:
—thou join with those wise men,
Of solid substance and fixed resolution,
Who stand behind the Senate's wholesome rule.
Believe: I urge this, Gracchus, from my longing

To serve thee truly, who myself have served
The meanest-stationed of the vulgar herd.

Fulv.:

Shout high thy service, Drusus, by whose cheating hand
The Tribune Gracchus lost his chosen charge.
Shout high! Shout high its worth!

Drus.:

Thou speakest ill!

Gracch.: [*to Fulvius*]

Let be!

[*to Drusus*]
Before my lips unloose the flood behind them,
There's one who must be heard. Philocrates!

Phil.:

My lord?

Gracch.:

Tell thy mistress that I pray her company.

[PHILOCRATES salutes; exits]

Fulv.: [*to Gracchus*]
But, Caius, why debate?

[GRACCHUS and FULVIUS walk aside]

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
I saw a kindling in thine eye, just now,
That spoke as doth a beacon in the night.
What stirs?

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
A thought: the seedling of a tongue-twist,
That flowers in the furrows of my brain.

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
Its name?

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
The augurs,—nay—the bud 's not yet full formed.

Calp.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
What news?

Antyll.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
There 's naught to tell.

Calp.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
Thy lagging tongue
Mismates thine eager palm. I say :—what news?

Antyll.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
A proper soldier makes a faulty spy.
Mine eyes, of their own wisdom, fail to know
Or where, or how to look, or what to see.

Calp.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
Arm they within here?

Antyll.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
But as children arm,
Who cushion every blade, lest it do hurt.
Our lord is loath to shed the Roman blood.

Calp.: [*aside toAntyllius*]
What else?

Antyll.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
There 's naught.

Calp.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
Their schemes?

Antyll.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
Their schemes?

Calp.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
I've said.

Antyll.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
Their schemes—

Calp.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
Come, speak!

Antyll.: [*aside, to Calpio*]

If they prevail, why, then,
The Gracchus dictator; lay bounds to wealth;
Deprive the rich of all their great estates.

[CALPIO walks away; PORTINUS shows himself for an instant from behind column of exit to ostium, evidences amazement, then disappears]

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]

I 'd answer with the sword, not with soft speech!

[Enter LICINIA, PHILOCRATES]

Licinia:

My lord hath bid me?

Gracch.:

Dear Licinia, nay—
I but entreated thy kind favor here.

Lic.:

Good sirs:—I welcome you to this, our home.

Drus.:

The roof-tree gods protect thee, Gracchus' wife.

Fann.:

May Jove's companion be thy constant guard.

Gracch.:

Most gracious and belovèd, at this hour,
Thine husband has been called on, by these lords,
To come to a decision most supreme.
The words now spoken must foreclose me quite
Of one way, or the other. One of these
Spells truce with those whose might now stands assured,
By every vested power, the state's dread law;
It spells soft leisure, and the sweet enjoyment
Of vivid life, and all the mortal things
The body craves, and fancy finds its lovely lure.

But by the other way, one quickly comes
To desolation's home, to lowering skies of lead,
To bloody toil, to days and nights of dread,
To scorning friends, to pain-racked limbs, and tears
Of anguish for the dullness of the slaves
On whose behalf these grinding griefs are borne.

Lic.:

My lord: it is ill day when woman's whim
Inclines her husband's will.

Fulv.:

Most noble dame,—
I hail thee wit, and sage!

Fann.:

But judge the choice?

Gracch.:

This is my proffered choice:—or yield, and now,
Chafe knee on flooring at the Senate House.
And whining "Grace! I erred!" by that one lie,
Earn brotherhood with all the tawdry liars there,—
Or, venturing a Gracchus, as of old,
Take Truth for mistress, and, in her fair name,
Speed to the doom ordained for every mortal
Who dares proclaim this heavenly bride his own.
'T were wrong of me to move, in such a choice,
Until thy voice hath spoken for thy mind.

Drus.:

Unfairly put I say! It makes a prayer
That reads its own response.

Fulv.:

Thus every prayer.

Lic.:

Dear lord:—the night I came to thee as bride,
I brought thee neither riches for thy needs,
Nor station, nor such other vulgar things

As some men seek of women, or of life.
I brought thee but the honor of my soul,
A virgin body, and a sweet regard
For that high spirit, which, from out the ruck
Of casual manhood, marked thee what thou art.
Thus didst thou take me, and from that first hour,
When, 'pressed with fears, and doubt of a new life,
I yielded to thy passion's fervid clasp,
I 've lived thy wife, my husband, and, so living,
Have wondered I had thought I lived before.
I 've lived thy wife, my Caius, to enjoy
Not only triumphs, and the loud acclaim
That flowed to thee or from the high, or lowly;
Not only feasts, not only songs, or crowns
Of glory from a grateful people's hands:
For these, a myriad concubines thou couldst
Have found, with ease, dear husband, at thy call,
Or lustful Cyprians, or else the frail
And shallow ladies of our high-born world,
Who deck their bodies daily for the feast,
And spurn a share in aught but life's delights.
Ah! no,—I 've lived to be thy wife indeed,
Who sought to be as worthy of thy trust
As she Rome honors as thy mother. Come,—
Hast thou forgot that day, my husband, when
Thou haltingly madest known to me thy wish
That from the beauty of our long-time home,
Which reared its stately frame on Palatine,
We take our course to this drab precinct? Ah,—
Hast thou forgot the joy with which I flew,
T' effect the change that served thy need—or thought—
So glad that now, at last, my day had come
To put away a thing I dearly cherished,

That thus our lives and loves might blend the more?
Hast thou forgot that day when thou wert brought
From slaughter's field, a quiver of raw flesh?
I drove from out thy private chamber, then,
Both nurse and slave, and, during nights and days,
While holding vigil o'er thine anguished bed,
Mixed, with my tears of sorrow at thy pain,
Joy of th' unfortune that had given thee to me,
Alone to love, and tend, and bring to life.
Hast not forgotten, husband:—and the doubt
Thou, now, in jest, pretendest of my wish,
Hurts—pains—as if some thoughtless, cruel word
Thou hadst to thy Licinia first addressed.

Drus.:

Declared, divine Licinia, as befits
A Roman lady, and a Roman wife.
Yet is it well that lofty thought, at times,
Consult with prudence, in a lovèd cause.
Love is but life, and pallid death writes " end "
Both to the warm embrace, and to the tender glance.
Respect is joy, and he who walks abroad
The butt of envy, and the served of men,
May well content his very inmost soul
To give some whit of this, or that belief,
So as to live less freely, but to live secure.

Lic.:

I know not of thine art of giving up
To keep. The part can never be the whole!
Naught touches me but this: that in all things,
My husband will so do, that when, at last,
He seeks within mine arms, or on my breast,
What of soft solace from myself may flow,
Mine eyes will boldly look in his, and find
Naught of the craven, naught of the coward there.

Fann.:

Unhappy woman! Dost thou urge thy spouse
To death, or nameless torture, worse than death?

Gracch.:

Dost dare to threaten? Here?

Fulv.:

So, so, with threats?

Drus.:

Nay, he but argues—

Lic.:

Urge, or threat,—'t is one!
I 'll speak you now. Here, by my mate, I stand!
Unclothe him, men, of all his dignities:
Proclaim him felon, or impress the mark
Of basest slavery into his flesh!
Still will my loving hands weave crowns about his head,
Still will my fervid lips kiss off the horrid shame!
The rack? The fire? But Caius will not shrink;
And when, at last, ye render back again,
Misshaped, or limbless, Caius Gracchus' frame,
It will be far more straight, and whole, to me
Than even golden-haired Apollo's own!
I am the wife of Gracchus, lord: I 'm not
His light of love, or plaything of his ease!

Gracch.:

Licinia!

Fann.:

Foolish woman—

Gracch.:

Fannius!
My wife came hither but to guide my heart,
And not to hold debate with such as thou.

Fann.:

Dost dare!

Gracch.:

I dare, and say!

Drus.:

Harsh speech! Harsh speech!

Gracch.:

Ye seek my answer in your various ways:
Thou, Drusus, and thyself, my ponderous lord!
Here,—take it to the vampire crew that waits
Within the vaulting hall of yonder fetid tomb!
I am my brother's brother,—his, whose voice,
Spanning the mournful water in its strength,
Calls plaintively each day to me, still quick.
I am my mother's son, and, through her blood,
The blood of Scipio is mine:—the "staff!"
Staff of the lowly I, and though, by guile,
The Senate, and those others ye name "greatest,"
Have, haply, robbed me of my lawful right
Still to strive on for them as Tribune; yet,
I am not like the false Lucanean lake,
Which, erstwhile sweet, now to the parchèd lip
Yields but the torture of a bitter brine.

Lic.:

There speaks my Caius!

Fulv.: And my Caius, too.

Dear lady,—I do homage to you both!

[LICINIA embraces GRACCHUS; enter PORTINUS]

Port.:

My lord—

Gracch.:

Speak on—

Port.:

A message.

Gracch.:

Give it me.

[PORTINUS hands roll to GRACCHUS, who walks aside with FULVIUS and LICINIA. PORTINUS starts to go out; hesitates, stops in front of ANTYLLIUS, makes as if to speak; ANTYLLIUS makes gesture of impatience; PORTINUS starts to walk back toward GRACCHUS]

Gracch.:
Aught else? Speak out.

Port.: [*hesitates*]
No, master; there 's naught else.

[Exit PORTINUS]

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
What cursèd spirit arms him to the fight?

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
He thinks in rhetoric, and feeds on dreams,
And sacrifices fact for that which seems.

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
He 's stone.

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
We 'll try once more.

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
And then—

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
Tonight,
I shall unfold what shapes within my mind.

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
The augurs?

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
Yea . . . . When Fulvius said
" Pah! "
I felt the rootling of a thought bore here,—

[Points to his head]

and sprout.

Antyll.: [*aside, to Philocrates*]
I have thy leave, at dusk?

Phil.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
Till sunrise. Return
In time to guard our lord, when he fares forth.

Antyll.: [*aside, to Philocrates*]
I thank thee. Gods! Were I not poor, nor had
A daughter—

Phil.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
What—

Antyll.: [*aside, to Philocrates*]
'T is naught,—the soul of naught;
I was but dreaming. That was naught I said.

Phil.: [*aside, to Antyllius*]
Portinus peeves thee?

Antyll.: [*aside, to Philocrates*]
Aye—that 's it! That 's it!

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius and Licinia*]
My mother writes.

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
All 's well?

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius and Licinia*]
She thinks all 's ill.

Lic.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
What 's wrong?

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius and Licinia*]
She makes complaint that Scipio's
Own daughter hears the Gracchus' nomen linked
Too oft with news of loss, defeat, and, worse—
Of ignoble retreat! . . . .

[Puts away the roll]

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
I tell thee, Caius: we war, or else—we perish!

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius*]
With reason—

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
No—with arms!

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius*]
We 're Romans—all.

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
We 're hunted prey, who shed our natural tusks
And seek indulgence of the bloody chasers, we!
[Angry shouts are heard]

Gracch.:
What 's that?

Phil.:
My lord, it is thy clustered friends,
Who chafe, impatient of thy tardy stay.
They cry:—" Our Gracchus keeps us waiting much! "
And fret their peevish mood with their own clamor.

Fann.:
Drink in the essence of that threatening growl,
And sense its import fully, fatuous boy!
What is its source but all-pervading lack?
Lack of the softer virtues, which the mind
May gather only through the many years
When, free from carping care, and crushing want,
Man hath the leisure for the gentler promptings;
Lack of the courteous bearing, and the lack
Of that concern of equals which is quickened
By others' sorrow, and their pain, or need.
These are thy clients—the sorry pack for which

Thou, Caius Gracchus, hast renounced thy right,
By brain and blood, to greatness in our glorious state,
To be, instead, the whilom chief of those
Who, when art giving, croak to thee:—" Hail, gracious lord! "
And when art spent, will shrilly shriek: "Thou dog! "

Fulv.:

Dog art thyself!

Lic.:

O wicked word!

Gracch.:

Nay, nay,
Refrain from chiding; for there comes much truth
From Fannius, conjoined with all the gall
That flows from him. The Gracchi know too well
The timber of the fickle crowd, and if
'T were but for gain, or profit, or for high
State station, that I strove with those poor folk—
Whose shifting passions take the place of thought,
And of whose loyalness, the greater portion
Is but the clamor of an empty gut—
Then might I think as Fannius, and as
He doth, so, mayhap, even might I also do.

Fulv.:

That, heaven and earth and hell would all forbid!

Gracch.:

But I—I writhe in anguish and in pain
Because I 'm bid by that which dwells in me
That neither have I chosen, nor can lose.
A demon, say patricians—perhaps 't is so;
A god, my friends cry—be it as it will;
For, good or evil—there's the urge which still,
With inward lashing, drives me on and on.

Drus.:

Thou dost beguile thy brain with fervid words,
And for a figment forfeitest thy life.

Gracch.:

Life? . . . . . Life? . . . . . How, then? Is that
a private thing
That 's given every man, at birth, to keep?
Life is a loan, and not a gift. What use
We 've made of it, we all must answer, when
We 've to return the pledge to its first source;
And there 's conviction in me that some power
Makes jealous inquiry into its state
When, at th' appointed time, it homes again:
What hath been wrought with it? What
treasure hath been earned?
Was 't but for passion's glut, or mere elapse,
Or for one's self, or common good, its lease
Was exercised by him who held the grant?
And when these questions face my life, at last,
I would not have it droop, in squalid shame,
For Caius Gracchus' deeds in his short term.

Drus.:

But thou art very young. Hast labored much;
Make ease thy love; give up some time to play,
And when thou hast attained to calmer age,
Come back again to public life with ripened
mind.

Gracch.:

What! Are the years of life laid out so sure,
That man may treat them as a fixèd fund,
On which to draw for this, or that, expense,
As inclination may dispose his spendthrift will?
Not so to me. I view each passing day
As something pilfered from me, and I see,
In every falling night, the terror of a loss,
That naught repairs. Life speeds in constant
ebb.
It is a cask of water, deftly tapped:
The outer view shows a small spurting stream,
But, seen on top, the surface is serene:

The liquid mass below seems dark, and firm,
And gleams assurance of a long, unmoved repose.
Thus, while it slowly settles, on the staves
Wet rounds go dry, and pass away; and still,
The lowering whole bears, on its lineless face,
No index of the lessened bulk below.
But see! There comes a swirl! The constant sucking
First marks the placid surface. There 's alarm!
And now, the pangs of dissolution grow
More turbulent, and more: the remnant sways,
And agitates, in terror of its fate,
The while the vacant body dully moans,
And shivers to the sobbing of the flood,
Till, in a racing, whirling, gurgling stream,
That runs more swiftly as it strives to stay,
The dregs rush out . . . 'T is done . . . The cask is dry!

Fann.:

If I interpret thy mind properly,
It nibbles at immortal fame. Good. Granted.
But wilt find the road thereto much smoother paved,
While mounting higher, higher in the state
As brother of its masters, than as now art:
The creature of every changing whim and mood
Of that breath-wafted garbage in thy gutter.

Gracch.:

To live forever in the minds of men?
Aye, that 's a moving wish: to cause a passing name
To sound in ears of those as yet unborn,
When he who claimed it is but powdered dust!
Man: that which stirs in us, and brings this prize,
Is not invoked by splendor of estate,
Nor by the laurel won by strife, or craft;
Yet every whining beggar hath a store
Of price thereof to spend.

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
The price is very mean.

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
He raves! Or else, to balm his recent wound,
He hath recourse to fancies of future bliss.

Drus.:
What is this paltry price thou wouldst extol?

Gracch.:
It is the thing named love—the pitying love—
That closely holds all mortal grief and wrong
Within its tender fold, and gently smiles
An understandingness and fragrant cheer.
That love, broadcast with prodigal uncount,
Will flow to its first source in after-time—
Though aeons pass—when one with quivering thought
Yearns for the love of him who one time loved.
There lies the secret of unending life:
Immortal love, alone, avails to breach
The stubborn wall of immortality!
Bethink thee that no man may earn such love
In high estate, nor yet by sheer designing;
And sense the folly of thine empty words!

[Shouts. Enter ragged plebeian, accompanied by old woman]

Antyll.: [*holding pleb.*]
Hold, witch's son!

Pleb.:
I am no witch's son,
But one of Caius Gracchus' men! Sweet lord—

Gracch.:
Art troubled? Enter.

[Pleb. runs in, falls at GRACCHUS' feet]

Pleb.:
O thou friend and hope
Of Rome's most poor and lowly! Certain ones,
Who saw thy portal frame lord Fannius,
Now hiss in doubting ears the tale that thou—
Thou hast forsaken us, the common ones,
And made soft peace with Rome's accursèd rich.

Whereon—since I am neater garbed than most
Of Rome's free citizens, who wait thy word without—
An embassy am I, to bring to thee
Their prayer thou do not leave us for the bribe
Lord Fannius holds out with which to buy thee,
But stay our gracious father, as of yore.

Gracch.:

Shalt stop, and thine own very self shalt hear
Mine answer. Now arise. No Roman should
Bend knee to other than a god. Arise!

[Pleb. rises]

And this one with thee?

Pleb.:

She 's a matron, lord,
Sent hither by the will of all the people,
Who seeks thine aid for her young soldier son.

Gracch.:

I 'll hear her presently. Rest, mother, rest.

[Assisted by Licinia, old woman sits on bench]

Pleb.:

Who spoke of bribe for thee, shall rue his speech!

Fann.:

Dost glibly prate of bribes, my fiery friend;
Here 's a denarius. Go out and shout:—
" Hail Fannius! Hail! Hail! "

Pleb.:

That I will not!

Fann.:

Here 's five denarii. Now wilt thou shout?

Pleb.:

Say'st five?

Fann.:

Aye, five.

Pleb.:

Yet—is—my—answer——no!

Fann.:

Here 's ten denarii for thee—thyself.

Pleb.:
For—me—myself?

Fann.:
For thee! Now wilt thou shout?

Pleb.:
Now—will—I—shout? For—ten?
[Cheers by populace]

Fann.:
Ten silver coins.

Lic.:
O gracious Juno, pity us!

Drus.: [*aside*]
The world
Hangs trembling in the balance for ten coins!

Calp.: [*aside*]
Thou noble Roman citizen! To serve
Such chosen of the gods was I enslaved!

Pleb.:
Ten whole denarii! Why—that—would—buy——

Fulv.: [*pushes pleb. outward*]
Run! Tell the waiting friends that our good chief,
Great Caius Gracchus, takes no bribe! Shout that!

Pleb.: [*running out*]
Cheer Caius Gracchus, for he hath refused
A mighty bribe, a very mighty bribe!

Drus.:
'T is for himself he cheers.

Fulv.:
He 's honest, still.

Drus.:
But by another's, not his own free will.

[Shouts "*Hail, Caius Gracchus!*"]

[*to Fulvius*]
Take shame! Thou hast despoiled that scurvy rat
Of treasure he will much regret, when once
The ardor of the instant hath worn off.

Gracch.: [*to old woman*]
Now, mother, speak thy sorrow: let me hear.
Old Wom.:
Lord Gracchus! Be my shield this tearful day,
And save my boy—my baby!
[Kneels at GRACCHUS' feet]
Gracch.:
Who art thou?
Old Wom.:
A Roman mother.
Gracch.:
Of a son?
Old Wom.:
Aye, lord,
Who'th served the city in three long campaigns,
Was five times wounded, and hath naught to eat.
Gracch.:
Who wrongs thee?
Old Wom.:
One who had much corn, from whom
My son, to feed us both, took what his hands
Could carry, of his store.
Gracch.:
And now—
Old Wom.:
Those hands
He loses in two days. Gods!
Fann.:
For the theft?
Old Wom.:
Theft? Theft? And is it theft to take to eat
When hunger gnaws within, and there 's no work to do?

Fulv.:
No work?

Old Wom.:
No work for those who ask a wage.
There are too many slaves who work for nothing:
The slaves our conquering soldiers brought to Rome! Ha, ha!

Drus.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
There 's humor in the sibyl.

Fann.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
Curse her plaint!
She makes our task the harder in this house.

[Turns to old woman]

But did the youngster, to secure the needs
Of both of you, make offer of himself
In servitude?

Old Wom.:
In slavery? My son?
A Roman soldier?

Fann.:
Aye—why not? You 're poor?

Gracch.:
O monstrous!

Lic.:
Horrible!

Fulv.:
O swelling heart,
Void, void the blood that floods thee, or it bursts!
Stay, murder that invades my straining throat,
And dims mine eyes with red! . . . That 's what they seek:
To make all toilers slaves!

Old Wom.:

If he had dared
To such dishonor, I 'd have seen him dead!

Fann.:

Dost see him worse!

Old Wom.:

My son! For just a few,
A paltry few, dried grains of needed corn!

Drus.:

That 's theft. That is the law!

Old Wom.:

Then change the law!
Such laws are wicked! Do ye hear? They 're vile!
The law? What was the law when ye called out
My boy, as soldier, from my side, to face
The tearing shafts of death? Ye said 't was needful,
And so I gave him. Now he needs, and I:
And we, who offered up our lives when bidden,
Are not to take a little heap of corn—
We, who to serve you, took a world in arms!
Law! Law! When one who 's naked takes some clothes
From him who hath too many—is that stealing?
When one who 's hungry takes some food from him
Whose belly 's crammed—is that a theft? Why? Why?
It 's need! Your law—your law that calls it wrong,
Needs curing! Change it! Make it work both ways!
Whom ye 've the right to draft for death, have right
To draft, in turn, the things they need to live!

The thief is he who hoards while others starve!
That 's law! Oh, save him! Save my little boy!

Gracch.:

Alas, I 've not the power, for I 'm not
A Tribune any longer. Drusus is.
Beg him.

Old Wom.: [*kneels to Drusus*]

O help me, Tribune!

Drus.:

'T is the law!

Old Wom.:

And there 's no help?

Fann.:

No help, old woman, none.
Now, get thee hence.

Gracch.:

This roof is mine, not thine.
Stay, rest thee, mother: eat, and pray the gods;
Perhaps they will have pity on thy boy.

Old Wom.:

The gods? There are no gods! There are but those
Who have the gold to make all Romans slaves,
And we, who serve them, and give up our lives,
To make them fat: so fat, so fat, so fat!
There are but we, who should have all, with not a thing;
And they, who, earning not a thing, have all of all!
Ha, ha, the gods! Patricians! Lords! Elect!
Hell curse you! Curse you, bloated blood-suckers!
Hell curse you! Leeches! Oh, my boy, my boy!
His hands! His two dear hands! My darling baby's hands!

[Exit old woman]

Gracch.:

Make fast the portals.

Phil.:

Aye, my lord; 't is done.

[Exit PHILOCRATES]

Drus.:

Thine eyes have seen. Now hast thou learned aught new
From that ambassador, and that old beldam
Who oozes anarchy?

Gracch.:

Aye, I 've learned much
Of evil in that state, wherein one man
Hath so much wealth, that with the paltriest pinch
From out his smallest coffer, he can buy
The very inwards of still another, who,
Because he craves some ease, must sell his arm and faith.
And, also, I have learned from that poor mother
To whom thou wouldst not grant the Tribune's aid.
To think of it! He took a few hard grains of corn,
And pays with his two hands; but ye—ye take
Vast lands, hoards, mounds of unearned toll, whole provinces,
Cheat out of taxes, make the courts your tools,
And Romans gab, and growl, and shake their heads, and do—
Just nothing! Ye enjoy, and scoff, and thrive, and thrive.
By Jupiter! Is all this to endure?
If so, then heaven 's void, all morals jests,
And laws are but the patter of sheer fools!
But I will not believe it! No! I 'll not!
I 'll not believe ye 'll flourish on this wise forever!
I 'll not believe the commons will not rise,
That they will not shake off their stupid sloth,
Their indolent, their shrinking, cowards' sloth,

And bring you to a stern accounting on some day!
I 'll not believe it, sirs! I 'll not! I 'll not!

Fann.:

So, still art—stubborn—intent on thy design?

Gracch.:

Yea! On the morrow, in the Forum, they—
The pompous master-thieves—those ancient ones
Whom callest Roma's greatest—they, and I,
Must lay our issues for the whole of Rome to judge.
There smugly plead your hoary rights to take
What hath not wrung your sweat; to feast on that
Which other hands have culled. But I, again,
Will cry the truth that no man, or by birth,
Or by the play of craft, should stand empowered
To claim command of place, or others' toil,
Or reverend bow, or usury on that
Which hath not been amassed by present labor done.
That is my gage; I 'll stake on its true merit
The issue of the people's voice, whatever
The guise be of the scheme ye may employ
To cozen them into some offward move
Drawn to undo my work for them of many years.

[Shouts of populace: "*Gracchus! Hail Gracchus!*" Sound of closing door. Noise of shouting becomes deadened. Enter PHILOCRATES; resumes his station]

Fulv.:

There speaks the statesman and the man of arms!
And to that challenge add we all our force!

Drus.:

The dextrous wits that plan for other things
Will drown thine efforts in some special flood
Devised to work that end. The surging mob,
Whose throaty bellow sounds so brave the while,

Will leave thee, as is left one loathsomely
Marked leper, when the masters, in accord,
Bestir their minds to silence thy loose tongue.

Gracch.:

Say'st thou they 'll leave me? Then is Gracchus lost;
But if I win? Thou fox-head,—if I win? . . . .
Hoc age! Count your stakes before ye play! . .
Hast heard my words: they point my future deeds!

Drus.:

Then here we part,—and here thy doom is sealed.

Gracch.:

Aye, here we part: each to his several fate.
Thou, Fannius, to thy trough, and Drusus—thou—
Smooth, trilling cuckoo of the lawless high—
Take thee the path of dalliance and of lie!

Drus.:

Enough! This insolence makes patience vile;
Art forfeit to thy fate, thou reckless man!

Fulv.:

Which runs, at least, with honor, reckful sir:
A word thou may'st not use without a blush,
E'en though thou live to see thy knowing nose
O'erlap thy clever chin.

Drus.:

Thou scum!

Fulv.:

Thou—well—thou thou!

Gracch.:

Philocrates! Conduct lord Drusus as he came,
And then unfold our inner gate to these.
[Points to FANNIUS and CALPIO]

Drus.:

I fear for thee most poignantly, my friend.

[Exeunt DRUSUS and PHILOCRATES, R.;
GRACCHUS, FULVIUS, and LICINIA, L.]

Fann.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
That woman makes my cooling blood to course
With ardor and desire I 'd long thought dead.
Mark well her safety for mine arms' delight,
When she 's deprived of Gracchus' shielding clasp.

Calp.: [*aside, to Fannius*]
Thy Calpio will bring the radiant dame,
Whole and unsullied, to thy passion's feast.
[*to Antyllius*]
I have some other questions—

Antyll.:
Not here; I fear.
I furlough tonight: I 'll meet thee for an hour.
My purse is flat—my special need distressing.

Calp.:
At my lord's.

Antyll.:
An hour. Gold coins?

Calp.:
Hast said.

Antyll.:
Done.

[Enter PHILOCRATES; bows to FANNIUS, who exits with CALPIO, escorted by PHILOCRATES and ANTYLLIUS. Shouts: —"*Ah—Fannius!*" "*Gracchus! Hail Gracchus!*" Enter GRACCHUS, LICINIA, FULVIUS. GRACCHUS and FULVIUS bear their togas]

Lic.:
Stay, Caius. Rest at home; my love prays: stay!

Gracch.:
Nay, sweetest wife: those fretful ones await,
Whom I must court again within the hour,
Lest, overnight, their fickle memories lose
The service of two lustrums of full years.

Lic.:
Then arm thee, husband?

Fulv.:

That 's my prayer, too.

Gracch.:

The Gracchan sword is not for Roman breasts.

Lic.: [*lifts sword from wall*]

If not for thine own self—for mine, my lord!
O do not challenge Fate with lowered point,
Nor shed thy buckler when there 's menace by,
Which thee but once, but me will prove a thousand times
With fatal thrust, whilst art abroad.

Fulv.:

Take arms!
Meet feint with blow, and for a wound deal death!

Gracch.:

I fight *for* Rome, not Romans! And this sword 's
A warrior's, not a warder's!

Lic.:

Dearest love:
Think well of slain Tiberius, and me.

Gracch.:

I pray—beseech—thou do not cast thy tears,
As fuel, on the raging flames that now
Consume me. There 's such warfare in my breast
As when two mighty hosts are battle-locked.
Now grip and tear my love, and earth's desire,
That bend me to the languor of thy bosom;
And now those mighty legions range the field
That cry my duty. Wife! Let those win the day!

Fulv.:

Caius! They fight with club, with pike, with secret blade,

Whom thou opposest with mild argument.
Arm right with power! So the gods have done,
When they have deigned to aid in mortal strife!

Lic.: [*lays sword at side of fountain*]

Not so! Not so! Go forth, my love, go forth!
I feel, I read thy soul, and know its goad!
And if this kiss be sealed our very last—
'T is a caress of honor, that Jupiter himself
May envy any mortal.

Gracch.:

Gracious love—

Fulv.: [*to Licinia*]

Thy mind 's my champion, thy heart 's my foe;
I fear your hearts will bring us all much woe!

[Shouts by populace: "*Die, Fannius!*"]

Gracch.:

Attend!

[Enter PHILOCRATES, ANTYLLIUS]

What 's toward there?

Phil.:

The populace
Assails lord Fannius!

Fulv.:

Good! Speed his death!

Gracch.:

O wretched men! Have Romans come so low?

[Strides toward doorway]

Fulv.: [*makes motion to restrain him*]
Nay, Caius, let the hungry, snarling wolves
Feed on their meat.

Gracch.:
Are we like Drusus, then,
Or even Fannius—to 'venge a wrong,
Whose cure is in our wills, with cowards' blows?
Forfend such guilt!

Antyll.: [*looks out through doorway*]
My lord, he is o'erwhelmed!

Gracch.:
O craven deed! Who love me, speed to shield!

Antyll.:
My lord, I go! I go!
[Exit ANTYLLIUS]

Phil.:
This hot despatch
Hath strangeness in its quality.

Gracch.: [*to Philocrates*]
Wouldst say—?

Phil.:
Mine arm lives with my heart.

Gracch.: [*to Fulvius*]
And thou?

Fulv.:
I must:
Persuaded by thy will, but not thy thought.

Gracch.:
Then speed!

Fulv.:
I bid my leaden self to fly,
To raise the arm that will assail us. Hi!

[Exeunt GRACCHUS, FULVIUS, PHILOCRATES. Cry: "*Hail Gracchus! Hail Fulvius! Hail Gracchus!*"]

Gracch.: [*without*]
Friends, stay your hands, in Rome's proud name!
Halt! Halt!

[Tumult ceases. PORTINUS enters stealthily, takes GRACCHUS' sword; exit]

Lic.: [*in position of adoration*]
Ye gods, who read men's hearts, and know their souls,—
Heed this, my prayer:—Guard and preserve my love!

Curtain

ACT II

Chamber in Palace of Caius Fannius

[Before curtain:—voice of one man chanting:

To make one such,
Who hath too much,
Ten thousand go with all too little!
In Vulcan's name,
Hold, curb and tame:
The over-rich men's acres whittle!

Chorus, by many voices:

They have too much, and we too little!
So let us whittle, whittle, whittle!]

[FANNIUS wears several bandages]

Fann.:

They do not come?

Calp.:

My lord, all Rome moves here,
Excepting, only, those for whom we wait.

[Distant sound of men marching; chant by many voices:

" They have too much, and we too little!
So let us whittle, whittle, whittle! "]

Fann.:

Yelp on, ye slinking curs! Yelp on, before
The master-brains of Rome appoint the way
To whip you back to lair, and den, and kennel,
For ever more to crouch, with lips so sealed
By cringing fear, and terror's livid lash,
That for a thousand years, no common creature

Will dare to lift his eye again, to gaze
Directly on a high-born face! Yelp on,
Ye toilers with the hand! Soon shall ye woo
That silence which ye now destroy, as boon
Most blessèd, and with shrinking, quaking, freezing hearts,
Pray for the privacy ye now eschew,
Lest that your knotted persons may obtrude themselves
To any idly wandering patrician gaze,
And thereby earn the ironed whip, as instant pay!

[Enter RUTILIUS]

Rut.:
Ave!

Fann.:
Here at last!

Rut.:
Yes, father.

Fann.:
O—'t is thou.

Rut.:
But I. My welcome 's cold?

Fann.:
Yes, . . . No. . .

[Distant chant:
"*We 'll whittle, whittle, whittle!*"]

But stop!
There 's that I should discuss with thee at length,
Which, to allay th' impatience of a tryst
Delayed, I 'll speak on now.

Calp.:
Sir, by your leave—

Fann.: [*to Calpio*]
I wish thee here. Thou hast a festive sense,
That sometimes shames mere wisdom.

Rut.:

Hold my back!

[CALPIO stands behind RUTILIUS]

Fann.:

Good son! The tripping tongue of rumor speeds
A brackish tale to my reluctant ear—

Rut.:

Pan's pipes! What now? And of what heinous crime—

Fann.:

The crime of folly. Yesternight, 't is said,
With other youths as brainless as thyself,
Thou didst display to all the eyeing world
Upon the common highway, such mawkish state
As did more honor to thy vintner's skill,
Than to the due regard for outward show
That birth, and ancient rule, impose on thee.

Rut.:

'T was but a lark. Patricians all, we played—

Fann.:

There lies the fatal fault—that ye were all Patricians.

Rut.:

But the maids we flushed—

Fann.:

The maids?

Rut.:

Aye—that 's the circumstance that first betrayed
Our play to vulgar view. Night was still day.
We were a company of Roma's best,
And oldest, families. We were in haste
To revel at a Grecian woman's house,
Where Aphrodite holds her lustful state,
And teaches, by her adepts, arts of loving
We, cruder Romans, have not yet attained,
When at a crossing, lo—a startled flock
Of common maidens, homeward bound from some

Rite of devotion at the Huntress' shrine.
To-ho! The game drew chase! Who could resist? We pointed!
And, these in laughter, those in earnest, we,
First but with words, then hands, and then with curling arms,
Endeavored to induce to pleasant pranks.
But, of the quarry, some with real, and some with mock of fear,
Sought flight, and so filled the air with piping shrieks,
That soon the scum came pouring from the holes
Wherein they 'd burrowed for the settling dark.
Then—valor had been folly. We withdrew,
In order, from the fray, as nobles should.
The maidens scampered on their way. We strolled on ours.
'T was thus the passing frolic ended, quite.
At least—

Fann.:

And thou wouldst say—

Rut.:

Within mine arms,
I held, a little while, a girl more fair
Than has made glad man's eyes since that far day
When Troiia's prince first saw his Helen's radiance gleam.
But innocent, scarce ripe: her rounded breasts—

Fann.:

Forbear! What 's more to tell of the event?

Rut.:

While struggling in the prison of mine eager hold,
She cried: " I know thee, son of Fannius!
My father is Antyllius—great Gracchus' guard!
Shalt know his wrath when he hears of my hurt! "

Fann.:

Antyllius!

Rut.:

The same. What then?

Fann.:

Most strange!
What sightless cast of Chance is this? Or, is it some
Untoward throw of Fate's enmeshing strands?

Rut.:

Chance? Fate? Hail, both! By Jove's seductive eye!
I swear I shall enjoy that maid ere cocks crow thrice!

Fann.:

Dost rave!

Rut.:

That I do not! My mind is set.
I burn with hot desire: such craving as never yet
Hath shriveled mortal flesh with amorous fire.

Fann.:

Son—this Antyllius is now applied
In service that 's most urgent to us all.
But for his sheltering steel, I were a corpse this hour.

Rut.:

Antyllius—and thou—?

Fann.:

He is our spy.

Calp.:

He 'waits me in the courtyard now, to tell, tell, tell!

Rut.:

I 'll have the maid!

Fann.:

Antyllius is one
Who would most mightily avenge his wrong.

Rut.:

I 'll have the maid! 'T is but a common man,

In ranks, whom wouldst hold out to balk my will;
I 'll have the maid, e'en though a legion full
Of sweaty plebs maintained her moated keep.
He 's here; he does not know. He must not leave to learn.

Fann.:

Come, Calpio: hast moved the boy, at times;
What say'st?

Calp.:

The youth sounds valor with his words.

Fann.:

He is of noble stock, and gracious line,
But of this madness—

Calp.:

Sir,—in high-born ones,
The will to have flares out in various ways,
Of which the common herd must pay the due;
For this are ye the lords—and those the folk.

Rut.:

Ha, Calpio! Some day I 'll make thee free!

Calp.:

I 've thrived so long in careless state, as willless slave,
I 'd faint beneath th' oppressive freedman's load.

Fann.:

Now end this Attic salt. The instant questions,
That press for quick solution, make thy will
To this one rape an added load upon
My groaning back. Bethink thee well, my son:
Forego this thing.

Rut.:

I 'll have the maid! I crave
Her body for my pleasure. It were vain
To be a noble born, and to possess
Unnumbered stores of wealth, if still the strong
Insistence of the flesh were wronged with iced denial.
It is my due! I 'll have the maid!

Fann.:

What must
Will be; yet this thou owest to thyself:
Still to debate thee both thy loss, and gain,
In every act that 's traced to thine own hand.

[Chant by many voices:

" They have too much, and we too little!
So let us whittle, whittle, whittle! "]

Dost hear that demon's song? It sounds a threat
More present than thy greenling mind absorbs.
Mark well those words!

[Chant by one voice:
" So let us whittle, whittle, whittle! "]

Rut.:

I did not write the song.

Fann.:

But thou may'st write its sequel by thy frolics;
A sequel that will fall upon thy head
With splintering force. Bethink thee of the fate
Of Appius Claudius.*

Rut.:

Art bound to chide?

Fann.:

Not chide—but teach. Give heed to mine advice.
Art rich and noble. Thou art both because
The futile mass we call plebeian dogs
Believe thee better than themselves. That thought
It is the business of thy life to make
Grow ever more established in their minds.

Rut.:

Thy words are pleasing.

---

* Vide story of Virginius.

Fann.:

Attend still further, son.
Thy life is but a sacrifice to effort
For those of lower fortune, whom the gods
Have, in their wisdom, ordered to be poor,
And servants of thine hands. So! That 's the part
Assigned to thee, by Fate, to play. And while
Thou dost impersonate that character with skill,
The world of joy, and pleasure, is all thine,
To sate the appetite for what thou wilt;
Take that which lures thee most; enjoy the best
Of all the things that woo thee: murder,—cheat,—
Suborn the magistrates,—seize virgin maidens
To grace thine orgies,—send a myriad men
To bloody war, to please some paltry passing whim,
Or yet to heap up treasures in thy chests;
They 'll serve, those fools: they 'll pay—they 'll slay their own—
And hail thee great, besides, and cheer thy name,
If only dost pretend—and do it well!

Calp.:

Give ear! Give ear! Pretend! Pretend 's the word!

Fann.:

Pretense and Cunning! These are the twin pillars
That hold aloft the house of High Estate.
Play that which thou art not, with studied noise,
Do that which is thyself, in quiet style,
Or such that none remain who may avenge,
Or make a public talk that ever can be heard.
Preach virtue, piety, and loyalness,
But see these poisons ne'er infect thyself.

Acclaim as patriots the cringing servile,
Denounce as traitors who presume to free-born thought.
Be quick with vengeance on who dare thy rule,
And lean on Terror as thy surest aid;
But if the plebs essay to strike in turn,
Hire hostile chiefs to force thy yoke on rebel necks,
And, having mastered, pave the land with twisted dead!
Make life a thing of profit. Every act
He who is destined to high place commits
Is first well planned to bear the heavy fruit
Of rich reward. Do naught for naught! Hold that!
Who hath, is master; who hath not, is slave.
Who wins is virtuous; the loser 's knave.
To those, the common ones, allot the bliss
Of great rewards in some uncertain future state;
But grasp thy profit here—and reach for more, and more!

Rut.:

But great ones sometimes give with lavish hand?

Fann.:

Give charity for profit, but make very sure
Its trickling is well trumpeted to every ear;
Tag public benefactions with thy name,
But, suck out thrice their cost by increased tolls.
Keep wary eye on scribblers,* for there is
Malignant power in the fluent pen.
Command its scraping; hold its adepts as
Thy strumpet heralds: or by gold, or guile,
Or else by making easy to be grasped

* There was a stringent law against the publishing of offensive satires. Macaulay says that while Rome acquired practically all her literary style from other nations, satire was her own highly developed production.

The laurel to thy panders, in the while,
Thou dost, by shouted laughter, or high scorn,
All paid for from thy purse, make come still-born
The offspring of the hostile-flavored brain.

Rut.:

How still the empty stomachs, when they yelp?

Fann.:

Make phrases. When most filching, speak most fine!
The vulgar all to lick-spittling incline;
Emotions for the low—for us the loot;
Urge them to sacrifice: and snatch its luscious fruit.

Rut.:

Yet, time, and time, they force the shield of laws?

Fann.:

Keep Janus' temple gaping. All the rights
They toilsomely attain while reveling in peace,
These aspen-brained cast off with gladsome shout
Whene'er we sound a martial strain without.
Roll up thine eyes, and shout: "Our duty first!"
And strip them, while their gusts of fervor burst!
Declaim sonorously of Honor, Right,
Of Trust, and Faith, and Love's Ennobling Light;
Sing Sweet Contentment to the timorous mob,
But, or in peace or war: lie, rob, lie, rob!

Rut.:

But there are others who will do the same?

Fann.:

Make common cause with those of thine own kind;
Eternal plotting is th' eternal base
Of rule of caste by caste. But plot and war by stealth.

Rut.:

What if betrayed,—arraigned?

Calp.:

Thy mind 's acute.

Fann.:

If ever by some clear-eyed foe art charged
With any of these deeds,—in shrieking ire
Call every god as witness to the stark
And vicious falseness of his horrid slander;
Invoke the glory of the Roman name,
And fill the air with noble-sounding words,
While in a minor tone thou sowest dark hints
Of nameless ills to come if art denied thy ways.
Whereon, the stupid rabble will denounce
These libellous aspersions at thy call,
And, at thy bidding, they will join to prove
Their splendid, lofty spirit, and to earn
The graciousness of thy approval, by dispatching
The bawling plaintiff from the Tarpeian Rock,
As enemy of Rome. 'T is thus the slinking cur,
Kept starving by his master, fawns on him,
When called to bark or bite; in hope, withal,
To earn a passing pat, or rancid bone . . . . .
Such is the wisdom of the world, that hath been
Since earth was earth,—and will be for all time.

Rut.:

Thy counsel's weight allows of no retort . . .

Fann.:

Hast learned the need of caution in thy sport?

Rut.:

There 's naught I 've learned that makes me more afraid;
I say again: I 'll have that lovely maid! "

Fann.:

Then dost thou still impress me with the task
To make her succorless . . . Perplexing . . .
[*to Calpio*]
What say'st?

Calp.:
It may be done, perhaps, but—
Rut.:
Shame on thee,—
To bring a " but " into so fine a speech!
Sing once again, without that jarring screech!
Fann.:
Thy humor 's vile—
[Enter guard]
Guard:
My lord: the Consul 's here.
Fann.:
Admit him.
[Exit guard]
Now the gods be praised! Here 's one
Who drives his scruples where his needs command;
A worthy master in a troubled land!
[Enter OPIMIUS]
Hail, first of Romans! Take my flowing thanks
For calling council in this humble place.
Opim.:
Thy body's wrongs call louder than thy voice,
And, as thy words, win both my love and trust.
Fann.:
To both of these I urge Rutilius,
My son, whose presence I would fain have here.
Opim.:
Why not? It shall be so. The fledgling must
Try out his wings some day: well struck the hour.

Rut.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
In this grave council, all I have to say
Is that I 'd like my little maid to-day.

Calp.: [*aside, to Rutilius*]
Full often, for one high-born youth's desire,
Have nations kindled war's consuming fire.

Opim.:

Our Drusus tells me, good friend Fannius,
Your several missions of this day were both
As vain as harmful?

Fann.:

Harmful? How the harm?

Opim.:

In that the Gracchus hath full warning, now,
Of our declared intent to send him hence,
To join his dear Tiberius—like friend
Of Rome's unkempt—in ghostly revelry.

Fann.:

That is of small concern. The man is daft.

Opim.:

In your debate, did he uncover aught
Of understanding of the prime design
Of Drusus', and of thine, conjoint attack
On every bulwark of his resolution?

Fann.:

He sees but his own dreamings. We two moved
As had been planned: our efforts were as thinning smoke.
I boldly stormed his porch, the while our men
Sped news throughout the waiting throng that now
The Gracchus had made peace with us, and ours;
And Drusus, moving quietly, made shift
To gain an entrance by the rear, and as
By chance, he merged his counsel into mine,
To talk of peace to Gracchus. But he 'd have
None of our bait. With rolling eye, he spewed
Fine speeches about souls, and duty, and like
Phantasmal fancies of his flighty mind.

Opim.:

There is the pity. Had he but said " peace,"
It had been simple to hang up his fleece.

Fann.:

His fleece? I 'd like to hang his steaming bowels!

I 'd like—enough of that! To-morrow night
Or sees us masters over all, or else
But creatures of the riff-raff's will, at last.

Opim.:

The urns?

Fann.:

Th' event 's too precious to venture
Its outcome on so light and poor a cog.

Opim.:

It cheated Gracchus.

Fann.:

Aye—but they suspect.

Opim.:

What are his schemes?

Fann.:

Repeat them, Calpio.

Calp.:

A tyrant's throne for Gracchus; limit thrift;
Steal our estates. I 'll learn the rest anon.

[FANNIUS motions to CALPIO, who exits.]

Opim.:

So that 's it? By Hecate! Our purses bound
By cordage, as is bound a snarling dog?
Ourselves deprived of means to bribe, to rule?
By all the darting demons of deep hell,
I cry to war! War! Bloody, blasting war!

Fann.:

I breathe to say thy words. None others come.
But let us wait our Drusus' counsel; he
Hath laid a stratagem our minds should weigh.

Opim.:

I 'll leash mine anger, till he comes. And yet,
At times I fear this subtle, and his wit:
What if ambition should inflame his comb?
A timely caution to the foaming mob——

Fann.:

He hath his use, and, useful, should be used.
The cattle, driven to the slaughter-pen,
Soon sense the horrid blood-air that pollutes
The dreadful region, where, in former days,
By myriads, their kind have twitched and died.
They roll their eyes, and snort in sudden fear,
Then toss their curving horns in growing rage,
Stamp on the earth, and threaten, all at once,
To sweep across the plain in thunderous mass,
That must leave death, and beaten ruin, in its wake.
'T is now the drover, skilful in his trade,
Lays by the goad, abates his boisterous shout,
And no more seeks to urge the doomed ones onward.
With gentle gesture, and with softened, cooing voice,
He brings his bell-cow on, instead, which, trained
To prance, with flirting tail, and merry step,
A-down the funneled ways, that bring the meat
Within the slithering reach of sharpened knives,
Or of the heavy hammers, plied by butchers,
Leads on her followers, with honeyed moos.
The herd, its fears forgotten, follow her,
As something loved, and of one's own—a friend—
Who knows the path, and beckons on to peace—
And never knows the truth, until the strokes
Rain on the heavy bodies, dealing death—
The while the winsome leader passes on,
Unharmed, to play her destined part again
With countless victims, gathered for man's use.
But if, perchance, that gladsome, grizzly thing
Seems but to pause—or shirk her treacherous task—

The herder slily makes a sign, and lo,—
The tempter shares one end with those she tempts.*

Opim.:

Then, in the recess of thine eye, a beam
Keeps constant play on Drusus?

Fann.:

As, in fence,
The swordsman does, so I.

Opim.:

Then I 'm content.

[Enter CALPIO]

Calpio:

The Tribune Drusus.

Fann.:

Say to him: we wait.

[Exit CALPIO]

Opim.:

I hope he brings us action, not mere talk.

[Enter DRUSUS, CALPIO]

Drus.:

My lords—your servant.

Fann.:

Nay—thy debtors, we.

Opim.:

The Gracchus dies; on that we have resolved!
'T is thine to plan for us his wan retreat.

Drus.:

Who picks a fruit that is not ripe to eat,
But grasps a colic, and wastes future meat.

Opim.:

Thy riddle is not plain. Speak out! Speak out!
They scheme to filch our lands, to limit what
The measure of our wealth shall be!

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*It is interesting to note that, while the indicated fate did not overtake the Drusus of this generation, it did come to pass in the case of his son, of like name, some thirty years later. The younger Drusus played the same role in public life that his father had found so profitable. One day he overacted his part; the patricians became suspicious, and he was promptly murdered; apparently in his own home.—*Ant.—Liviae leges.*

Drus.:

My thoughts
Revert to that ill-managed day in Rome
When certain brave patricians, streaming forth
From out the Senate House, by hasty cudgel-blows
Wrote "Veto" on the two times Tribuneship
The first-born Gracchus thought to claim his own.

Opim.:

The tale is old.

Drus.:

And one I do not like
For those miscast events that followed in its train.

Rut.:

Dost mean the wondrous sport our nobles had
With Billius*, who, couchèd, for his ease,
Within a cask that had been bedded down
With vipers, learned, in that soft company,
The lesson of a tongue too swift and sharp?
Or of the candied maggot-trap that was prepared
For others of that Gracchus' friends, which some
Have named the Persian boat**? 'T would be a lark
To see such games played once again with those
Who, with the Gracchus, fight the sacred gods, and us.

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* After the assassination of Tiberius Gracchus, the patricians murdered his friend Caius Billius, by placing him in a barrel that contained deadly snakes.

** The Persian boat:—The body of the condemned man was thoroughly smeared with honey. He was then placed in a boat. Another boat, inverted, enclosed him. His head and feet protruded. He was forcibly fed milk and honey. His position was maintained that the sun always shone in his eyes. He was actually eaten alive by worms, ants, etc. The victim generally suffered many days before death came to his relief.

Opim.:

The youth hath spirit, and a sprightly sense.
[Strides up and down chamber]
To limit wealth! Ha, ha! To take away
The lands we 've held for generations past!

Drus.:

Not those my thoughts. My shrinking mind reviewed
The passion of the mob, robbed of that rascal;
And all the melancholy pain that then
Came to our own Nasica, daring man,
Who, raising "Law and Order"* as his cry,
Defied the faint-heart Consul, and the rest
Of those then Senators, who rather chose
To judge the elder Gracchus by the statutes,
Than by the good right arm patrician men
Are born to use against their foes. 'T was he
Who led the noble band that strewed the brains
Of that Tiberius upon the paving
Of the Capitoline. And yet the splendid deed
Was so ill-planned, that our Nasica perished,
A fugitive,—in exile. Then, there was
Popilius, the stalwart, who sped to doom
So vast a crew of Gracchus' fellows: he, too, fled,
A wanderer from home. Such precious price was paid
For that one proper killing, all too rashly worked.

Opim.:

Hell take all history! To-day 's what hurts!

* It being evident that Tiberius Gracchus would be re-elected Tribune, and that the protective laws would be carried, the patricians raised the cry that he was aiming to make himself King. S. Nasica, at that time Pontifex Maximus, called on the Consul to order Gracchus destroyed. The Consul said that it was proper to *wait until Gracchus had done something illegal, and then take action under the laws.* In the language of Plutarch: "Upon which Nasica started up, and said: 'Since the Consul gives up his country, let all who choose to support the laws follow me.'" Thereupon Nasica, and his followers, covering their heads with their cloaks of office, rushed out to the Rostra, where they scattered Tiberius' brains with blows of a bludgeon, and murdered about three hundred of his friends.

Fann.:

The burden chafes. Dost know full well there 's naught
We may invoke against this scurrilous rogue—
The living Gracchus—that will serve to win
The low-born mob from him. But he must die!
Must die!

Drus.:

Still, there 's a way—

Opim.: [*strides across chamber*]

Then show it! Show it, sir!
Those mangy curs! Those vermin!

Fann.:

Thou hast a thought?

Drus.:

The same as when I counseled those loose laws
That are ascribed to me on our tablets.
When Gracchus called for two new towns, I said:
" Deny it not, but in the Senate's name,
Thrust down those hungry gullets laws that call
For five times that." When he, to draw the love
Of that land-lusting multitude, ordained
To grant them soil at some small fee, I countered:
" No fee at all! Give gifts! " And so, to-day ye see
About the Gracchus but a part of those
Who, twelve short months ago, acclaimed him their sole chief;
Wherefore are we now ready to put knife
To all these damnèd laws, and with one blow
Destroy them,—every one,—both his and mine.
But still, slow caution must guard our every deed,
Lest from some rashness we may come to need.

Opim.:

Come to the barb! Show up thy barb! Thy barb!

Fann.:

Thy plots have won their gain. Go on; go on.

Drus.:

To end the Gracchus, we must first destroy
The trustful love the people bear him. That
May not be done by frontal open storming;
No, no,—it must be done by flanking blow:
Some feint, that will within the eye-wink draw
The popular regard from Gracchus as he is,
And hold its gaze on that which is as foreign
To him, as is the mole to lark. It calls
A play on that most potent weakness that 's
Implanted in the commons, and aye held
For use by us:—their squashy sentiment
For things on high,—that always serves the ends
Of those who scrape with skill on this most mellow string.

Opim.: [*strides up and down chamber*]

They 'd put a virgin's girdle round us, hey?
I 'll answer with a circlet 'round their necks
That shall choke off their bellies, tongues and brains,
And make of plebs gaunt poles of muscled toil!
[Stops, points at DRUSUS]
By all the labors of the patient Hercules,—
Thy plan! Thou hast a plan?

Drus.:

Aye, that I have.
To-morrow we 'll debate, not of the laws,
Nor of the rich, nor poor, as Gracchus dreams,
But of quite other things.

Fann.:

There is naught else.

Drus.:

We 'll make a something else.

Opim.:

Thou wilt invoke—

Drus.:

The gods.

Opim.:

The gods? Where drifts thy mind?

Rut.: [*aside, to Calpio*]

More gods!

Drus.:

When I was but a youth, my sire imposed
This rule on me:—to reach, with dart, the gray goose
That makes its flight across the dreary moor,
First thou must learn the art of gently stalking it.
Think not to catch the bird by forward rush;—
Nay—it behooves thee well to learn some squawk
That will distract it from the native pull of caution.
Then may'st approach it, hidden by some copse,
And while it thrills, enchanted by thy winning call,
Send in thine arrow! The game will fall.

Opim.:

Ye gathered gods,—thou hast a pretty tongue!
The fable 's wise. But how 's our purpose served?

[Strides across chamber]

I 'll make their hill a sowage of small brick,
The home of hooting owls, of prowling wolves!

Fann.:

And how the gods?

Drus.:

There are four hoary frauds,
Whose battered masks, bedaubed with new red dyes,
Avail to smother, in the vulgar herd,
The will to strike the shackles from their limbs.

If any preach a new religion, or
A new philosophy, or base for happier life,
Or any thought that threatens those who rule,
Shout: "Rape! They seek to violate our homes!"
Or "Woe! They 'd murder all our thrifty men!"
Or "Treason! They design to wreck our state!"
Or "Sacrilege! They flout Religion, gods!"
The saying makes it so: none dares dispute,
Lest gibbering fellows vilify his good repute.
And so, these win. To-day, I choose the gods,
With which to fright those oxen-witted clods.

Opim.:

Go on!

Drus.:

To-morrow that shall fall, for which
Our yeasty plebs will lose all thought of gold,
And land, and price of corn, and right to vote:
And think of Caius Gracchus only as
A wretch so wicked, that 't will be a task
Stamped holy, and most pleasing to the watchful gods,
To rid the land of him, and all his hateful like.

Opim.:

But Gracchus hath done naught. He is a tit,
Who rocks the nation with his acrid chirp,
But guards his arm, with coward's careful craft.
The villain hath done naught!

Drus.:

Nor will he do.
But, 't will be done for him; and to his arm
The deed will be so skillfully applied,
He 'll swear that to himself his own two hands have lied.

Opim.:

Speak to the project!

Drus.:

That I do, apace.

Rome's ancient custom is, that in the hour
When all have gathered for the ballots' test,
Thou, noble Consul, shalt make offering
To heaven's host and that the entrails, then,
Plucked from the fresh-slain victim, and well scanned
By the haruspices, shall be presented
For confirmation to the Lord of Priests.

Opim.:

All that is well. The belly-rippers have been told
What they 're to read, and when.

Drus.:

My point's not there.
While on his way with this most sacred charge,
Thy lictor shall be slaughtered by the blows
Of Caius Gracchus' friends—

Fann.:

I almost see . . .

Drus.:

Of Caius Gracchus' friends, or those who seem
In verity to be of them. Then,—*vale*
To talk of land, and gold, and rich, and poor,
And laws, and right and wrong, and like real things!
Shriek "Sacrilege!" and with that awful cry,
Make end of Gracchus, and of all his frenzied tribe.
I 've spoken.

Fann.:

And hast spoken well.

[*to Opimius*]

Say'st so?

Opim.:

It means the shedding of a lictor's blood . . . .
And if thine effort fail, and, in a while,
By some mischance, the truth becomes revealed?

Drus.:

What 's set in the confusion's moment, stays
The fixed event: the common mind accepts
The impress of the seal that ready brains and tongues
Affix while all the passions are in flux;
And naught of protest, or of proof, avails
To change that image in the after-days.

[Sound of men marching in distance, chanting:
" *So let us whittle, whittle, whittle!* "]

Fann.:

Hear that! Or commons' blood, or our own ease.
The field allows no truce; who rules must kill;
This one by sword, and this by scheme, but still,
Who would sit high, must have a bloody will.

Opim.:

I place my hand in thine, and cry to play!
The nobles, rich, and gods shall win the day!

Rut.: [*aside, to Calpio*]

I 've sat in patience, while they 've moaned and brayed,
But have not heard a word about my maid.

Calp.: [*aside, to Rutilius*]

Be cheered, good sir. Within thy sire's keen mind,
I feel a thought is forming, of some kind,
That soon will serve thy pleasure, and his pressing need.
Behold! He leaps to ride the new-foaled steed!

Fann.:

But if thou, gracious Consul, wouldst not lose
One of thy proven lictors, I 'll uncover
Another for the death, who shall display
Thy livery, and Pluto's, the same day.

Opim.:
Hast such a man?
Fann.:
I have: he takes my pay,
As spy, in Gracchus' household.
Opim.:
That sounds well.
Rut.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
Sweet, wondrous night! I have my little maid!
Fann.: [*to Calpio*]
That scurvy spy is here, my Calpio?
Calp.:
My lord,—Antyllius is in the court.
Fann.:
He 'th spewked his mind?
Calp.:
His soul. He 's empty, quite.
Fann.:
Go, bid him hither.
[Exit CALPIO]
Drus.:
Now we have the corpse,—
Who is to butcher him?
[Enter CALPIO]
Fann.:
My man—my slave—
My Calpio, who, habited alike
With Gracchus' friends, shall give the fatal thrust.
Calp.:
My lord—my lord—
Fann.:
Wouldst argue?
Calp.:
Nay, but yet—
Fann.:
No harm shall reach thee. The law, that sorry jade,
The Gorgon of the plebs, but our meek maid,

Shall neither see, nor know thy person, so,
Thy crime comes aptly, as our wills may show.

Drus.:

Now grasp this lesson of th' assassin's craft:
Thy victim, dying, may betray thee yet,
If he but names thee with his rattling breath.
Strike in the throat! So silence wins with death!

[Enter ANTYLLIUS]

Antyll.:

My honored lord—

Opim.:

He seems a likely man.

Fann.:

Antyllius:—hast served me faithfully;
So, learn of thy reward, which, from the grace
Of our full pleasure of thy toil, we give.

Calp.: [*aside*]

Prick up thine ears, sweet corpse, and earn thy killing!

Antyll.:

I 've served thee, master, as my station called,
And if at times the task has irked me, I
Had naught to do but tug my brain to contemplation
Of thy great purse, and my dire need. When some
Blabbed tales of a new state, in which no one
Had or too much or not enough, I 've swept the folly
From out the chambers of my mind, with this
Wise argument:—let others fear the high;
I serve them, and the meed of my reward
Will place me, soon, where I need never know
Gaunt want as guest again. I have a daughter—
A budding maid; my dream hath been to garner

A measure of industrious coin to earn her shelter.

Rut.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
Hear that? A bud! I 'll shelter her,—myself!

Fann.:
Enough! Enough! Thy tasteless task is done,
And soon shalt be a stranger to all need.

Calp.: [*aside, to Rutilius*]
And fear of need, besides, thou faithful man!

Fann.:
Now servest thou no longer me; instead,
Art lictor to our gracious Consul—to
The lord Opimius.

Antyll.:
The Consul's man!
O bounteous gods! I 'll post me home at once,
And shout the cheer to my most anxious girl.

Rut.: [*half rises, in agitation*]
Not—

Calp.: [*hastily*]
Stay—

Fann.: [*evenly*]
Thy service holds thee here this night.

Antyll.: [*pleadingly*]
My lord—

Fann.:
Hast heard—

Antyll.:
But there 's a moving reason—

Fann.:
A soldier reasons by obeying.

Antyll.:
I obey.

Fann.:

'T is well; thy news will be no less a joy
When, splendid in thy marks of new preferment,
Dost home to-morrow. Now, wait, in yonder court,
The detail of thy new employment.

Antyll.:

I wait.
The Consul's lictor! Fortune's mantle warms!

[Exit ANTYLLIUS]

Rut.: [*sinks back, relieved*]

Ye gods!

Fann.: [*to Rutilius*]

On what a wisp man's fate is borne!
A breath, a word, an insubstantial thought,
And empires crash, or peoples disappear . . . .

[*turns to Calpio*]

Thou, Calpio, wilt charge him with his task
Betimes, and hold him fast?

Calp.:

'T is done, my lord.

Drus.:

There! There 's a proper pleb! He knows his poor man's place.
He 'll die most happy. Now let 's set the plan
For the depletion of the Gracchus' ranks,
That will relieve us of those raucous hounds
Who urge the dull-brained pack to battle: mouthing curs,
Who agitate the servile class, and breed
Displeasure, discontent, and struggling effort!

Opim.:

I have a roll that bears three thousand names.

Rut.:

That 's ten for one! Three hundred names* sustain
The burden of our Roma's men of worth.

Fann.:

Well spoken: and that list shall be announced
Among the shades before we call the halt.

Opim.:

Th' assassins—

Drus.:

I have found. A husky band
Of soldiers, who, for some huzzahs and pay,
Will show to our aspiring citizens
The way to long, and toilless, peaceful sleep.

Opim.:

But if they arm and fight?

Drus.:

That they will not.

Opim.:

Thy certainty—

Drus.:

Is founded on the fact;
That half-wit cries the holiness of statutes,
And prates the sacred state of magistrates.

Opim.:

Our statutes—

Fann.:

Our magistrates.

Rut.:

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!
'T is well, 't is so.

Opim.:

'T were ill were 't not so.

[Enter guard]

Guard.:

The Pontifex, and other lords, have come!

---

*Livy and Cicero seem to agree in limiting the number of the patrician families to three hundred.

Fann.:

We greet them.

[Exeunt all but CALPIO]

Calp.:

I 'm to kill a Roman! Gods!
Stark fear, and pride, contend in me, apace:
Myself to kill one of this hated race!

[Enter PONTIFEX, FANNIUS, OPIMIUS, DRUSUS, RUTILIUS, Priests, Senators, etc.]

Fann.: [*to Pontifex*]

High-favored sir,* my humble home is graced
By the benignity of thine approach.

Pont.:

It is but meet that in this dreadful hour,
The gods seek wisdom from Rome's men of power.

Drus.:

Our brains have moved; the springal 's set; and now,
Naught 's left, high sirs, but for you all, and thou,
Our highest priest, and those who serve thy hands,
To turn what is our counsel into your commands.

Opim.:

Lords, senators and judges, praefects—friends!
Our Drusus hath prepared your several parts,
Which, on the morrow, when the shaft is loosed
That is to end the Gracchan lunacy,
Each must perform to win this dreadful fight.

Pont.: [*points to senators, magistrates, praefects, etc.*]

We are thy soldiers: order as thou wilt.

---

* The position of the Pontifex Maximus was rather an anomalous one. He was the head of the priests, but was not strictly a priest, in the modern significance of the term.

Calp.: [*aside, to Rutilius*]
See how persuasive is the voice of gold?

Rut.: [*aside, to Calpio*]
I have that maiden in my straining hold!

Drus.:
To-morrow, enter on the Forum, lords,
Prepared to rend your cloaks, and pluck your hairs,
And cry "Alas!" and weep with splashing tears,
Fit to alarm the mob, and press its fears.
The signal will be yours when, to your ears,
There wings the swelling shout of "Sacrilege!"
Then fleetly make your way to where we stand,
And, shrieking "Sacrilege!" wave hands on high,
And mingle frenzied shout with anguished sob and cry . . . . .

Curtain

ACT III

The Forum

[Curtain discloses the Rostra; crowd standing up to its edges. With rising of curtain, chant by crowd:
" *They have too much, and we too little!*
So let us whittle, whittle, whittle! "]

Cit.:

Ho! Silence! Caius Gracchus speaks!

Voices:

Still! Still!

Gracch.:

My honest Romans! Here, where he I loved—
Tiberius—was foully, basely, slain,
Here I, his brother, stand, to-day, foredoomed
To death as merciless*—

Voices:

No, no, no, no!

Gracch.:

But it is true! The cunning brains that plan
For profit, and for power, night and day,
Have so ordained, and now, they boast, this very hour,—
Invoking law to hide their Anarchy,—
They 'll still my life, so as to still my tongue:
These most respectable patrician lords!

Pleb.:

We 'll die with thee!

Cit.:

Thy brother's brother, hail!

---

*The resignation of Caius Gracchus to his fate, which has sometimes been adversely criticised, is by many said to have been due to his having heard Tiberius say to him, in a dream: "Why linger, Caius, when the same death by which I perished is before thee, likewise?"—*Cic. De Div. 1, 26.*

Gracch.:

My brother: ye recall him? Oh, ye recall!
That sweet, that gentle presence; he whose love
For Rome, and Rome's oppressed, gushed from a source
Exhaustion served but to renew tenfold!
Forgive these tears—

Pleb.: [*sobbing*]

They honor thee!

Cit.: [*sobbing*]

And us—
Men! Weep! Weep for that loss!

Pleb.:

Yea, such a loss!

Gracch.:

Him, him, who lived to serve you, they assailed
With the phantastic tale he sought a crown.
That lie—that monstrous lie—

Voices:

A lie! A lie!

Gracch.:

The lie they 'll find for me,—what man shall say?
But they will find it!

Cit.:

Let them find! Vain find!

Pleb.:

The gods themselves can never shake our faith!

Cit.:

We're wiser now! We're not so simple-brained!

Pleb.:

We know thee, Gracchus!

Voices:

Aye, we do! We do!

Gracch.:

What comes, will come. But still, before they rise
To take your votes on those most needful laws

Which they now seek to wipe from off the scrolls,
I pray you: let me endow your brains with judgment.

[Enter DRUSUS]

Many Voices:
Hail! Hail!

Gracch.: [*to Fulvius*]
Whom do they cheer?

Fulv.: [*to Gracchus*]
'T is Drusus' self who 's here.

Gracch.: [*to Fulvius*]
He hath befooled them, quite.

Fulv.: [*to Gracchus*]
And will, still more.

Gracch.:
The Rubrian law must stay!

Cit.:
Aye, that it shall!

Pleb.:
What Gracchus wills is right!

Cit.:
It is for me!
What say ye, comrades?

Pleb.:
Noble Gracchus, hail!
We 'll stay with thee till death!

Voices:
Till death! Till death!

Gracch.: [*to Fulvius*]
The gods be praised! They stand! Their wills are firm!

Fulv.: [*to Gracchus*]
I 'll tie the knot securely while I may.
[*to crowd*]
Now ye who hold with Gracchus in this hour,

And will to live, or die, as he deems right,
Raise up your hands and shout!

Crowd: [*all raising hands*]
We 'll die with thee!

Gracch.:
My comrades—honest Romans—ye all know well
The quality of my regard for those who toil.
But now, I thank you more for this, your gift
That ye 've so freely given, which, indeed,
Hath made me very rich.

Pleb.: [*to citizen*]
I had been told
He was not rich.

Cit.: [*to pleb.*]
'T is but a way he hath
Of saying that, in sooth, he 's very poor.

Pleb.: [*to citizen*]
Ah yes! That 's it. He is not rich, thou say'st?

Gracch.:
Your ears recall that when I came back home
From stern Sardinia's hard shore, I said
That I re-entered Rome's half-hostile gates
A man much poorer than when I had left.*
Candor compels confession. I was wrong.

Pleb.:
What 's this? What 's this?

---

* At the age of 27, Gracchus served as *Quaestor* in Sardinia under Orestes. The winter weather was severe, and the General demanded of the cities clothing for his common soldiers. The citizens appealed to Rome, and the Senate countermanded the requisition. The soldiers suffered greatly. Gracchus personally solicited the towns, and prevailed on their good-will to help the soldiers voluntarily. Also Micipsa, King of Sardinia, because of his personal affection for Gracchus, sent to the soldiers a large quantity of corn. The Senate, taking alarm at this evident popularity of the brother of the slain Tiberius, became openly hostile to Gracchus. The latter immediately came back to Rome, and faced his enemies. He then made the following statement, quoted by Plutarch: "*He was the only man who went out with a full purse, and returned with an empty one; while others, after having drunk the wine they carried out, brought back the vessels filled with gold and silver.*"

Gracch.:

I was, indeed, a poorer man in purse,
But when I think of all the fair repute,
And precious honor,* and the trustful love
I 'd won of you, my honest Roman men—

Voices:

Aye, that thou didst!
We love thee well!
Art ours!

Pleb.:

But hast no cheer, lord, for the Roman nobles?

Gracch.:

I do not love those noble, nor those high,
Whose titles rest on aught but service which
They have themselves done to their fellow-men,
For which some nice distinctions, granted by
The people's instant will, may point them out
As truly great, in act, in spirit, and in worth.
My soul goes sick at sight of those sleek rogues
Who claim the right, by virtue of mere gold,
Or of some station herited, or gained by strength
Of cunning, or of trafficking, or guile,
To strut about, the masters of our people and our state.
They are our enemies—those keen-eyed men,**
Whose hands are soft, e'en as their hearts are hard,
And from whose nimble brains flow all our woes.
Beneath their purple-bordered robes I spy
Men who, when others went to fight, and die
For Roman thought, and Roman law's wide sway,
Themselves, or through their factors, or their furtive kin,
Made profits on the corn our soldiers parched,

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* *Aulus Gellius.* XI; 10. See, also, *English Hist. Rev.*, Vol. 20, p. 433.

** Compare Lysias' Oration against the grain dealers. Pars. 14, 15.

And profits on our arms, and on our shields;
Made profits, profits, profits, on each thing
That we, the fighting men, or wore, or ate,
Or used to bleed the enemy. And these,
Who profited while others lost—aye—lost
Their hands, their feet, their eyes, their very lives,—
Now shamelessly display their ghoulish pickings
In chariots, in robes, in wondrous spots
Made beautiful for their abodes, and brand us
Low traitors, who assail their stealings. For me,
When any maid sprung of such loins I see,
Go mincing by, in all her trappery,
Of precious stuffs, and jewels gleaming out,
Attended by her slaves, and guards, and lovers,
And nosing in the air a state more high
Than that of any sweating workman's chit,
My bile flows hot: I 'd grasp her glistening hair,
And strip her naked, and, with spikèd scourge,
I 'd whip her through this Forum, loudly crying:
" Take off! Thou spawn of Profit! Take them off!
There 's blood on them, and rotten corpses peep
From every fold of thy rich-laid attire!
These jewels are the eyes of many dead,
Who clutter battlefields; these rarest scents,
That flow from thee, are pregnant with the stink
Of countless slaughtered, who gave all for naught,
While those whose name thou bearest stayed behind,
And gathered all for naught. Thou Vampire Thing!
Thou art a fearful growth from bleaching skulls!

And all the blood that tinges thy lips red,
Thy sire hath lapped beside the whitening dead!
'T is the blood of hungry babes who 've wailed and died,
Of starving mothers, whose wet breasts have dried,
Of meager men whose pulsing hearts he 'th squeezed
For those rich drops that for thine heart he 'th seized!
Away with thee, thou filthy womb of harpy broods!"
Thus would I cry and do! But law says: nay—'t is wrong.
And law must ever rule, however hard its words.
But O, my kinsmen, I would see the day
When every putrid swine who boasts of gold
Stored up by usury, or heritage,
Or huckster's lore, or other like device,
Be shunned by men, be barred from every shrine,
And have his brow seared with his darling marking:
The signium "Profit," which, when decent folk but see,
They may shriek out in curdling horror—and flee!

Drus.:

So thou, my frenzied friend, wouldst take the store
From him who hath it, as the fruit of thrift,
Or hard endeavor, or adventure staked,—
And give it to the sloth, to waste at will?
Such is thy traitorous driveling patter still?

Gracch.:

Proclaim thee imbecile, cold heart that feeds
A trifling, shallow brain, which ever tends
Adroitly to the wily frauds and schemings,

But not at all to ordered thoughts of state.
Rome once had kings; would ye have kings
here now?

Voices:

No! No!

Gracch.:

Yet was it said that kingly might should rest
In one firm hand, and that if placed, in parts,
Among the citizens, as it is now,—
If each were called t' account for power used,
And sternly punished for each power abused,—
There would ensue disorder, and a swirl
Of ceaseless riot, slaughter, civil warring.
But was it so?

Pleb.:

The gods bear witness: no!

Gracch.:

Ye took the power from one man, [redacted] his right,
And placed it with many, as a passing trust;
And this ye 've found more healthy, and more
good.
Thus would I do with private riches, friends.
I care not for the luxuries, nor lusts,
Of private men, that gold may buy or sate.
These soon exhaust the pampered sensual flesh,
And work their vengeance on their users'
softened selves.
But, private hoard is private empire; this
I hold to be such wholly baneful danger,
I deem a king less to be feared than him
Who, sitting in his treasure room, can dole
To this one this, and that one that, of wealth,
And, through such purchase, be thrice king
by stealth!

Pleb.:

That 's plain! That 's very plain!

Cit.:

Right! Right!

Pleb.:

Go on!

Voices:

Go on! Go on!

Gracch.:

These private emperors within our gates
Are our pernicious peril. By th' eternal Fates,
I would so order it, that he who hath
More riches than he needs for his own keeping,
Give strict accounting, to the meanest coin,
Of all its uses, as of rule employed,
That bears the burden of a likely ill to all:
So that no man be master of his fellows,
Except as is well-known, and set to him.
I care not, citizens, what final place
The law points out for such men's shining heaps;
Or be it showered in the Forum here—

Voices:

So! So! Aye, aye! Bring on! We 'll have it now!
[Laughter]

Gracch.:

Or be it buried in the moving sea—

Voices:

No! No! That were not right! That were a loss!
[Groans]

Gracch.:

So that no man be emperor at will,
With right to pass his sceptre, with his till!

Voices:

No emperors!
Say'st well!
We 're one with thee!
No private emperors!
No secret kings!

Gracch.:

I seek to limit every private dower,
When 't is no more reward, but private power.
Thus would I make the reign of Law complete,
And banish Anarchy from out our lovèd state.

Voices:

So we! So we!

Fulv.:

Swear that ye will be faithful to our chief;
And give no heed to those patrician lordlings,
Who come, with solemn mien, and strutting air,
To argue you into a cheat, that will
But make you more enslaved by your own shackling:
The victims of your dullness, and their guile.

Voices:

We swear! Gracchus! Gracchus! We swear! We swear!

Fulv.: [*to Gracchus*]
They 're firm! They stand unshaken!
[*to populace*]
We 'll tame these lords!

Pleb.:

We 've had our fill of lords! Who made them lords?

Fulv.:

Aye,—aptly questioned! Who, and what?

Pleb.: [*aside, to citizen*]
See? See?
He grasps my sense! He hath a proper mind!

Fulv.:

I 'll tell you who the lord is! 'T is the man
Who will not live on earning, but on gain.
It is th' eternal pimp! By wile, and cheat,
He gathers toll wherever he may find it,
And sports on peopled roads his gay attire,
His milky-tinted hands, and greenly-leering eye,
Encircled by no carping lines of care.
It is th' eternal pimp!

Drus.:

So, still ye froth,
And speak most ill of Roma's wise and great,
As is your wont. But ye, Quirites, know

That many laws, drawn for your weal, have been
Thought out, devised, enacted and proclaimed
By our good Senate's favor, in my name, that are
Twice ten times more assuasive of your wants
Than Gracchus' laws. Yet Gracchus cries his petty
And bootless meed, as if it were the whole
Of bounteousness and service, to yourselves,
That Rome hath ever witnessed, or shall see.

Voices: [*one*]
Ho, Drusus, art our friend!
[*another*]
Thou fraud! Thou fraud!

Pleb.:
Ho, Gracchus! What of Fannius! 'T was thou
Stood sponsor for him!

Cit.:
Speak of Drusus, too!

Gracch.:
I asked your votes for that which Fannius played he was;
I curse what Fannius is! This Drusus' laws
Are for your minds' confusion, not your use;
They 're for the days of voting, not for courts,
And each of them at very birth aborts.
One simple law, if honestly applied,
Is worth a code, the force of which 's denied.*
[DRUSUS makes motion of protest]

Cit.:
Ha, ha—that hits!

Pleb.:
That bores through his thick skin!

Cit.:
Our Caius knows the soft-spots of his hide!

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* " . . . but the Senate well knew that passing laws, and carrying them out, were two very different things. . . ." *The Roman Republic, Heitland, Vol. II. Sec. 732.*

Pleb.: [*aside, to citizen*]
I love these voting days, when every haughty lord
Must take our common wit, to earn our votes' reward.

Voices:
Speak on! Speak on! Speak on!

Gracch.:
I shall. This man
Is neither of, nor for you; not at all.
He 's but a vision, flashed in dazzling rays,
To blind your eyes, the while ye 're neatly plundered.
Who are his friends? Who vouches for his deeds?
Who speaks on his behalf? Who is it points him out,
As one to follow? 'T is the swindling lordly;
For which he is an evil, and a curse!
For, even were he true, as he is false,
And even were he earnest, as he 's not,
Yet would his truth, and earnestness, both die,
Because of those with whom he loves to lie.
This is a law of nature, and of man:
The dog that runs with wolves, itself grows wolf.

Drus.:
And thou, my bleating lamb, what is thy hope?
If all our gods be broken, and our great
Made small, how will whatever is thy wish be served?

Gracch.:
I wish to see a world that 's ruled by Law,
Which no debauching finger can approach!
I wish to see a world that 's free of guile:
A world no more a market-place, but made
A vineyard, and a garden, and a school.
I wish to see men's eyes freed of that sly,
That mean, that shrewd, that knowing, cunning gleam

Which now proclaims to all abroad the creature
Who hath attained the hideous shame that 's called success.
I wish to see men strive for finer ends
Than those of furtive gain, of secret rule,
Or dull and stupid labor for a crust!
I wish to see the worthy hour arrive
When flaunting show will be disgrace, when all
Must do their measured doles of toil for food, for roof,
For everything of need, but none at all of spoil,
And leave some time for every man to raise
His eyes from trough, or furrow, and to live
With thought, with love, with nature, with the gods!

Drus.: [*mockingly*]
And when all this hath come,—what shalt thou gain?

Gracch.:
What shall I gain? What does the bard, who sings
His song in lone, waste wilds; the poet when
He fashions out his measure; or when first
She gazes on her infant, what 's the gain
The mother hath of all her rending pains?
What is their gain? What mine? A dream made true;
A something yearning, straining, here, within,
That 's brought to being. Just a dream made true . . . . .

[Shouts by crowd]

Pleb.:
Thou noble Gracchus!

Cit.:
Tell us how to vote!

Gracch.:
This moment is most solemn: both for you,
Who are the life and striving of to-day,

And those who are to draw their sorrows from
your loins.
Give heed, that I may tell you in small words
Each detail of what 's staked, and what 's to
lose—

[Movement in crowd—murmur]

[*aside, to Fulvius*]
What 's there?

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
It is some show—I can not tell—

Gracch.:
This is a solemn moment, O my friends—

[Murmur, and movement in crowd, increase]

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius*]
I 've lost them, quite. What 's happened? Canst
thou see?

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
Aye, now I do. It is the courtesan
Most noted in all Rome:—she passeth by—

[LYDIA, in litter, attended by guards, is carried across rear of stage]

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius*]
And 't is for this they leave me! Ah, ye gods—

Fulv.: [*aside, to Gracchus*]
'T is but the people's way. Strike! Win them
back!

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius*]
Let be. Let be. Mark Drusus, there, who
stands,
And darkly smiles. There 's that within his eye
Speaks gloating threat.

Drus.:
The augurs come! The priests!

Cit.:

The Pontifex! The augurs!

Pleb.:

Silence! Silence!

[Enter PONTIFEX, augurs]

Gracch.:

Friends, bend respectful heads to these, our priests.

Cit.: [*to pleb.*]

He 's reverent, then?

Pleb.: [*to citizen*]

That Gracchus is.

Pont.:

This way!
Let him who brings the entrails pass this way!

[CALPIO, half-hooded, elbows his way through crowd]

Cit.:

Art rough, my friend! Wherefore this jostling haste?

Calp.:

Mine eyes would feast on Gracchus, closer to.

Pleb.:

Good wish! Pass on! Pass up!

[CALPIO mounts steps, and stands near GRACCHUS, who, with FULVIUS, PHILOCRATES, and PORTINUS, has retired to side of Rostra, near steps]

Voice:

The lictor! Way!
Make way! The sacred signs!

[Enter ANTYLLIUS, bearing entrails]

Phil.: [*to Gracchus*]

Sir—something 's strange.
Antyllius struts as lictor!

Gracch.:

Ha!

[ANTYLLIUS pauses, hesitates; DRUSUS makes a slight motion of hand toward GRACCHUS]

Port.:

Antyllius! Thou spy!

Antyll.:

Thou puling slave!

[Crowds near GRACCHUS; pushes him with free arm]

Make way, ye factious knaves, for honest men!

Port.:

Thou traitor! Traitor! Spy! Hell's furies! Spy!

Fulv.: [*to Antyllius*]

Dost dare?

Phil.: [*pushes Antyllius away*]

Thou worthless thing! For shame!

Gracch.: [*stretches arm toward Fulvius and Philocrates*]

Let be!

Calp.: [*standing between, and behind, Gracchus and Philocrates, stabs Antyllius in throat*]

Thou dog who dares flout Caius Gracchus—die!

[ANTYLLIUS falls; CALPIO drops stylus, and mingles with crowd]

Gracch.:

Help! Help! O bloody deed! Help! Romans, help!

Voices:

Ho! Stop him! Murder! Murder! Murder! Ho!

Drus.: [*points to Gracchus*]

Thou wretched murderer! Hopest thou to screen
Thy wilful crime behind an anxious mien?

Pleb.:
Who slew him? Didst thou see?

Cit.:
No, I did not.
It came so swiftly—

Gracch.:
Paltry jackal, what?
Dost dare accuse my hands?

Drus.:
That 's what I do,
And cry that Gracchus this poor lictor slew!

Gracch.:
O cursèd creature!

Cit.:
It was Gracchus then?

Pleb.:
Didst see? 'T was Drusus saw him—didst thou see?

Drus.: [*pointing to Gracchus*]
Here stands th' assassin, known of gods and men!

Voices:
It was not Gracchus!
No, it was his man!
Where is he?
Gone—he 's gone!
Who was it?
See! It was a stouter man!
A thinner!
I saw him run!
'T was Gracchus!

Fulv.:
It is a plot! Friends! Friends! Quick! Form a guard
To save your Gracchus!

Cit.:

Come! Let 's run to aid!

Pleb.:

But Gracchus slew the lictor—yea—I saw—
With mine own eyes—I saw his arm sweep wide—
I 'll almost vow I saw him speed the blow!
Indeed, it must be he, the guilty wretch!
To slay a holy messenger! Stay here!
For him I gave away ten weighty silver coins!

Cit.:

Say'st so? Didst see? Didst see?

Pleb.:

Didst see thyself—
And Drusus saith 't is so,—so it must be!

Pont.:

O sacrilege! Ye sacred gods—forgive!

Crowd:

O sacrilege!

Fulv.: [*to Gracchus*]

The day is lost. Now flee!

Gracch.:

Right must be heard! My friends! Attend my voice!

Pleb.:

Away, thou bloody man! Away! Away!

Voices:

Sacrilege! Sacrilege!

Gracch.:

But 't is a plot, my friends, a monstrous plot!

Drus.:

A plot? A plot? Is this

[Raises body of ANTYLLIUS]

limp man a plot?
Go bawl that word to ears more long than ours!
A plot? And did we plot to kill our guard?
Out, basest trickster! Enemy of Rome!
Too long have Romans suffered thy lax tongue
To wag, and flout our noblest, and our highest!
Now, Roman men, forget that there are rich,
That some are poor, and some are great, and some
Are born to humbler station. For, all men
Are useful in their several ways, and each
Receives what 's justly due him in his fated place.
Here, in the presence of this hateful crime,
We stand as Romans, first. Here, we lay by
Our private jealousies, and petty envies,
That far too much have stirred our common lives,
Lashed on to frothing fury by this low
And treacherous stabber of a man unarmed,
Who walked on sacred mission. I saw the deed
With these two eyes. And so did you, with yours?

Voices:

We did! We did! O bloody sacrilege!

Drus.:

What good to cry, the hand that threw the steel
Was not this Gracchus' own? How? Were it so,
Yet was it nothing other than his will
That urged its blow. And so, 't was Gracchus' hand
That wrought this fearsome crime. For which I say to you:
'T was Caius Gracchus' deed! Who says me nay?

Pleb.:

Not I! Not I! Here 's one who 's not misled!
I 'm a respectable,—I am a loyal man!

Fulv.:

Thou ratty, crawling fool!

Cit.:

Then I 'm one, too!
No more! No more of your seditious bawling,
Ye anarchistic rogues!

Drus.:

Good citizens!
I honor you! Such is the wondrous stuff
Of which the sturdy, loyal Roman 's made!
Say—now—what shall be done with this red felon,
This radical, anarchic fount of hate?

Gracch.:

Hear! Hear me, friends! Forego this dastard's wiles!
A boldly ventured lie stands half a truth,
Which, oft repeated, puts the last to rout,
And rears its loathsome visage in her place.
But, O, my friends, ye will not be deceived?

Drus.:

Thou infamous! Thou rascal! So, wouldst dare
To take the word* from me, while I am speaking
To Roma's tribes as Tribune? Thus, again,
Imposest traitorous crime on mortal crime!
Be silent, thou!

Voices: [*one*]
The Rock! The Rock!
[*another*]
Nay! Gracchus is our chief!
[*another*]
I did not see him do it!
[*another*]
He 's our friend!

---

*It was forbidden to interfere with a Tribune who was addressing the populace. It seems to be established that when Gracchus attempted to defend himself, he was accused of this impropriety.

Drus.:

And are there any here so villainous,
As still to call this creature friend? How now?
A lie? And is this death a lie? This piteous blood
That stains the Rostra's floor,—is that a lie?
Consider ye this low-laid, weltering corpse,
Of our loved Consul's lictor! . . . .
He served the Gracchus yesterday. To-day,
Impelled to fiery fury at the sight
Of that poor soldier in an honest habit,
This Gracchus slew him, or ordered slain, as ye 've all seen.
For, he 's a man of passion, as ye know—
The partner of this red-eyed Fulvius—
A ranting, foaming creature, stabbed and lashed
To violence by his own wild haranguing.
Ye 've seen him here,—ye see him now,—ablaze
With scarce impounded anger, for which quality
He hath been titled Cleon by learnèd men
Who know that Grecian braggart's style. But now,
Inspired by that same mood to felony,
He dares deny the action of his will:
An act so fearsome, that the very gods, aghast,
Shout down their curses, shrieking: "Sacrilege!"

[Makes sign to PONTIFEX]

Pont.:

Sacrilege!

[Makes sign to AUGURS]

Augurs:

Sacrilege!

Voices from distance: [*growing louder*]

Sacrilege! Sacrilege!

[Enter OPIMIUS, FANNIUS, RUTILIUS, and procession of Senators,* tearing their cloaks, wringing their hands, etc., crying: "*Sacrilege!*" They form a circle around body of ANTYLLIUS, showing signs of grief, raising hands upward in gestures of adoration, etc.]

Fulv.:

Ho—ho! Th' Esquilian vultures flock!

Pleb.:

Be still!

Gracch.: [*aside, to Fulvius*]

Our pious patriots! Alas, poor Rome!

Drus.:

Ye Roman men: good citizens,—the staff
Upon whose sturdy frame is built the thing
That is the state of Rome: ye see in grief
The Roman Senate—noblemen who are
Patrician since the founding of our city—
Do homage to the trunk of this that was
A common soldier—like yourselves—a man
Of humble blood. Yet here they waste in tears—
These gracious Senators. And why? Because
They are your Fathers, these, our god-marked men—
Who sit in yonder Senate House to plan
Not for themselves: ah, no—for you, for you—
For you and yours: these, in whose tender hearts
There 's naught but deep concern for what is best,
Not for just one, or two, or any part
Of Rome, but for its various, cognate, glorious whole!

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* "The Consul assembled the Senate, and while he was addressing them within, others exposed the corpse of Antyllius, naked on a bier without, and, *as it had been previously concerted*, carried it through the Forum to the Senate House, making loud acclamations all the way. Opimius *knew the whole farce; but pretended to be much surprised.* The Senate went out, and planting themselves about the corpse, expressed their grief and indignation, as if some dreadful misfortune had befallen them."—*Plutarch.*

"A plot!" this Gracchus says, "a plot!"
Now gaze!
And are these streaming tears a plot? These forms
That shake with griping anguish for this awesome crime?
And are our priests in plot? And this, our good
Chief Priest? Our Judges? And our Consul, too?
Come, think! Did all of these red-buskined men,
Cloaked by the night, meet in some secret closet,
There to plan out this crime, and these sharp cries
Of horror, and these bitter tears, as well?
What, then? Do we mislead you? Are ye fools?

Opim.: [*aside, to Drusus*]
Dost tell the tale so well, they will suspect!

Drus.: [*aside, to Opimius*]
Their pimply brains take fire; their fervor glows!
Their chests swell out: they 're patriots,—patriots—all!
I 'll make them pull the rope that strangles them!
I 'll prove to them what was could not have been,
And show the Gracchan wailings cheap, and mean!

Fann.: [*aside, to Rutilius*]
Now earn thy little maid with briny speech!

Rut.:
O woful sight! To view a faithful man
So cruelly laid low! Come closer, closer
Good citizens: wrap this silken cloak about
These poor remains. Gently! Treat them with respect!

Pleb.:
Thou noble, generous youth!
Cit.:
O kindly heart!

Pleb.: [*to citizen*]
Let us wail with them, so that we 'll be linked
With all these great ones, by the common grief.

Rut.: [*aside, to soldier*]
Burn wind to this Antyllius' home. Bring, thence,
His daughter to my house. If any hinder,
Say Lord Fannius wills! Run! Curse thee! Run!
Sold.:
Obeyed.
[Exit soldier]
Rut.: [*aside*]
O pleasant day! Bright gods! I thank you all!
[Turns to crowd]
Sacrilege!
Drus.:
A plot, he says—come, who believes that tale?
Are any here so vile? Is one so dull?
Pleb.:
Plots! Ha!
Cit.:
Conspiracies! What dreams!
Pleb.:
Dreams? Lies!
Fulv.:
Thou shifty rogue! I say it was a plot,
And that thy brain itself planned out this stroke!
Drus.:
Now, there is humor! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!
Crowd:
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!
Pleb.:
Kill, kill the wretch!

Old Wom.: [*struggles through crowd; ascends rostra*]
Way! Way for me! Ye Romans! Give me way!
Plebeian men! To Hades with the gods!
To Hades with the priests, the gold-blown great!
They hate you all! They lie! They 're liars! Liars!
Be loyal to yourselves, your sons, your blood!
The same as they are loyal to themselves, their own!
Here 's he who 's for you--Gracchus—stand by him!
He 'll save you all, as he will save my boy!
Hear but your needs, and not their clever talk!
Hear only Gracchus! Curse the priests, the high ones!
The oily, purring priests, these cheating knaves!
They sell you! Ye 're their wares! They dupe you, all!

Gracch.:
Good mother, cease—

Pont.:
O horror! Blasphemy!

Pleb.:
She 's mad! She 'th cursed the gods!

Old Wom.:
My boy! My boy!

Pont.:
Ho! Take her off!
[OLD WOMAN is seized and dragged off.]

Drus.:
Ye 've heard this frightful blasphemy, good men:
Ye 've seen this comedy, to stir you up
To deeds of violence, by making use
Of that mad, mouthing mother of a thief!

Voices: [*one*]
Shame! Shame!
[*another*]
The mother of a thief! O shame!

Drus.:

Come,—who is left that is for Gracchus now?
Who is against the gods? Who deems this deed
Of wanton murder good? Speak, man! Speak, many!
Let us behold such worthless citizens!

Pleb.:

The law! The law for Gracchus!

Cit.:

Seize him, then!

Drus.:

Attend, O Consul! Heed the commons' call!

Opim.:

Do ye surrender to the law's just course?

Fulv.:

We choose patrician's law—the law of might!
[*to Gracchus*]
And art not armed!

Port.: [*produces Gracchus' sword from beneath his cloak.*]
I 've brought the master's sword.

Fulv.: [*takes sword*]
Thou noble! Thanks!

[Tenders sword to GRACCHUS]

Here, swing this friendly pin!

Gracch.: [*sweeps weapon aside*]
What? Shall the father plunge the mortal steel
Into the bowels of his erring child?
I bring not Death, but Truth, to these gone wild.

[FULVIUS returns sword to PORTINUS]

Phil.:

I 'll be thy shield, my master! Forward, we!
By Hercules! My sword is good for three!

Opim.:

Ho, aediles! Call the guard! Ho! Seize these men!

Fulv.:

Who seizes me grasps lightning! Way, ye fools!
Make way! Come, Gracchus! To the Aventine!

Phil.:

Make way, ye asses' brothers! Ho! Make way!
[Holds out his sword]
Here Pluto rides. Wouldst stay him? Ha, there, way!

[FULVIUS, PHILOCRATES, GRACCHUS and PORTINUS make their way through the crowd]

Gracch.:

O fatal hour!

Opim., Drus., Pont., Crowd:

Sacrilege! Seize them! Seize them!

Curtain

ACT IV

Section of Triclinium in Fannius' Palace

[The setting is in the form of an "L," of which the front constitutes the lower member.

Necessary to the action: an embrasure, with outward fenestration, and a hanging that partly screens the embrasure from the main setting.

Curtain discloses revel in progress]

Drus.: [*throws dice*]
A Jupiter! No good! Septimuleius:—throw!

Sept.: [*throws dice*]
A dog!* Still worse! Throw thou, Rutilius—
throw!

Rut.: [*throws dice*]
A Venus! There! I win!

Drus.:
As is most meet;
So art thou King of Wine** at thine own feast!

Rut.:
Now let my father's attics rain their jugs!
Drink! Drink! And who to any cup saith "nay,"
Is sealed a poor plebeian thing this day!

[Exit SEPTIMULEIUS to other part of triclinium. Laughter by revelers. Shrieks, clash of arms, heard outside]

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* Every throw of the dice had a special name. The "canis" was the lowest throw, the "Venus" the highest.

** The "*Arbiter Bibendi*" was chosen by throwing the dice; and he directed the course of the feast.

Drus.:

There 's music for you! How our serving braves
Draw blood from them: those star-eyed promise-spillers
Who yesterday bawled of the rights of man,
And other gibberish of that same strain.

[Shrieks, groans, thuds, outside]

Kill! Kill! O splendid, heartening, joyous sight!
More Massic, slaves! More wine! A glorious night!

Rut.:

By Bacchus! I thirst more for maid than grape.
She tarries, while mine arms ache with desire,
And all my being hungers for the feel
Of that divine young body. Speed thee, maid!

Fann.: [*without*]

We give no terms to rebels!

Boyish Voice: [*without*]

But, sir—

Fann.: [*without*]

Go!

[Enter FANNIUS]

Revelers:

Ho! Fannius! Ho! Victor! Ho! Hail! Ho!

Fann.: [*to Rutilius*]

Hath Calpio yet homed?

Rut.:

Not since this morn.

[Shrieks, clash of arms outside. FANNIUS listens]

It is a welcome noise?

Fann.:

Thou say'st . . . . But now,
I wait a singular arrival, son.

Rut.:

The Gracchus?

Fann.:

No—not quite. The Gracchus' wife.

Rut.:

Ha, father—art of us! And thou wilt join
Our merry feast, when hast thy longed-for
mistress?

Fann:

I 'll play the satyr, and recall this much
Too aging frame to youth, with wine and wench.

Lyd.: [*advances to Fannius*]

How,—hast forgot thy love of other nights?

Fann.:

Those memories linger, beautiful, but now,
I am for firmer meat, that hath not felt
The impress of so many questing hands.

Lyd.:

Pooh! Pleasure-giving is an art, old goat,
That is not learnt in one man's arms alone.

Fann.:

The mellow wine is tasteful to the young,
But aged palates crave a draft more strong,
And seek the tickle of a rawer juice
To send a thrill through nerves bent on disuse.

Rut.:

I 'll joy with thee, adored, to stay the twinges
Of hunger for another.

[Embraces LYDIA, and reclines with her on couch]

Drus.:

Come, Lord of Drinks, command the merry
wave
To raise us on its crest, and float us off!

Rut.:

Wine! More amphorae, lead-footed scullions!
Wine!

Drus.:

Here 's bliss! Shalt love two fair ones in one
night!

[Laughter and applause by revelers]

Rut.:

It were a wondrous thing—could it be done—
To love two separate maidens, just as one.
That 's thought to stir a rhymster to pen verse!

Drus.:

Then be the poet!

Rut.:

Pindus has known worse.

Drus.:

Rutilius sings! Give audience to his Muse!

Rut.:

Your patience, and your ears, I 'll now abuse.

[Chants]

What a pity,
When a pretty
Maid I press within mine arms,
I can't smother
Still another,
With my kisses 'mid her charms.

Chloe's passion
Stirs, in fashion
Most sublime, but Phyllis' eyes,
Make me quiver,
Burn and shiver,
With an ever new surprise.

Fain I 'd blend them,
And both send them,
Thrillingly, through limbs and brain;
But another
I can't smother,
While one maid in love I strain!

[Screams, laughter, shouts, by revelers. Enter soldier, with HELIA. RUTILIUS springs from couch]

Two doves for thee, fair Venus! Here 's my maid!

[DRUSUS joins LYDIA]

Sold.:

My sword had failed, had not thy name prevailed.

Helia:

Protect me, Dian!

Rut.:

Sweet—be not afraid!

Helia:

Have pity, lord!

Rut.:

I 'll give thee more: my love!
Here 's an earnest!

[Seizes HELIA]

My kiss! I 'll kiss thine apples next!

Helia: [*struggles*]

Portinus! Father! Spare me! Spare me! Oh!

Drus.:

I fear 't will take some hate to love this maid.

Lyd.:

Look! See him labor with this latest toy,
The while he spurns soft-handed proffered joy!
My gorge turns somersaults. I go to seek more wine.

[Exit LYDIA to other part of triclinium]

Sept.: [*shouts*]

King of the Bumpers—haste! Thy crown awaits!
Come! Throw wide open Revel's crimson gates!

Rut.: [*to soldier*]

Take her to my small room. Await commands.

[Soldier carries HELIA away]

Good guests—your liege makes answer to your call!

[*aside*]

Though rather would he say "good-night" to all.

[Exit RUTILIUS to other portion of triclinium. CALPIO and soldier, with LICINIA, appear in doorway. Shrieks, clash of arms outside]

Fann.:

The spoils of war come fast; here 's booty worth
A prince's striving. So, again, I win!
Ho, soldiers, bring the lady here, within!

Lic.:

What dost thou seek to gain by this assault?

Fann.:

Thyself, dear lady, who, to stay unharmed,
While Slaughter stalks, blood-drippingly, abroad,
Shalt bargain for thy life with passion's kisses.

Lic.:

When Caius swoops, in vengeance, in the morn,
On Rome's gold-fingered ravishers, base hound,
Shalt know the kiss of steel in thy loose paunch!

Fann.:

Thy heated mien but kindles me the more.
[*to Calpio*]
Speak, Calpio! What news comes of that man?
When will he haste to claim his loving spouse?

Calp.:

Left single by the common horde, as one
Who broadly shows the plague-signs on his face,
The Gracchus fled, this even, from Selene's shrine
And now, like some doomed beast, beset, and chased
By men-at-arms, skulks within the Furies' Grove,
Where soon he yields—or dies.

Fann.:

And did he naught to earn
His passage to his hovel, and his wife?

Calp.:

He shed some tears upon the plate whereon
His father's form is imaged in hard bronze,
Which moved the stolid statue not at all.

[Laughter by revelers]

Drus.:

O frigid sire!

Fann.:

Hast heard! Thou art my prize!

[Seizes LICINIA]

Now earn thy life with all the wiles of love!

Lic.: [*struggles*]

Oh, Caius! Gods!

[Strikes him in face]

Drus.:

That was a lusty blow.

Fann.:

Thou! . . . Thou! . . . I 'll have thee, whether wilt, or no!

Lic.:

I in thine arms? When Ixion held the clouds,
That union bred the centaurs' frightful forms,
But if thy body but touched mine, I should spawn
Green toads, and hissing serpents, oozing slime!

[Enter Guard]

Guard:

Opimius, Consul, enters in the court,
The Pontifex, and senators, and more.

Fann.:

I haste to greet them. But, 't is best the master*
Of Rome be not persuaded by temptation
To covet my dame.

[*to soldier*]

Secure this woman,
And house her, privately, for my return.

[Exit FANNIUS. Soldier ties LICINIA; places her on couch, in embrasure]

---

* To make it possible for the slaughter of Gracchus' friends and followers to go on unrestrained, the Senate had voted the "*Senatus consultum ultimum*," which, in effect, made Opimius dictator.

Drus.: [*aside*]
Like son, like sire:—they 're warriors of the couch.

[*to Calpio*]
Thou lovest thy master, Calpio?

Calp.:
As a slave should, sir.

Drus.:
Thy words are Delphic.

Calp.:
My heart is Roman, sir.

[DRUSUS waves CALPIO away; CALPIO retreats]

[*aside*]
I 'm in his mind; I wish I were without it.
This man thinks hurtfully: his servile spirit
Bristles against the serving slave. I 'll hug his shadow,
Until I learn the target of his humor.

[Exit CALPIO. Revelers pass, dancing, etc. Enter slave, bearing wine-jug]

Drus.:
Hast seen our lady Lydia?

Slave:
She comes.

[Enter LYDIA; exit slave]

Drus.:
Divine!

Lyd.:
I 'm wearied.

Drus.:
Shouldst have stayed to see
The battle 'twixt our host and Gracchus' wife.

Lyd.:
Whose oak?

Drus.:
The issue lies in high suspense.

Lyd.:
That 's much to do for just one novel thrill!

Drus.:

The common drudge for bread, and what small pleasures
The grudging gods may grant them as rare treasures
Men freed from lives so profitless, the while,
Moil, in their turn, to earn some woman's smile,
Or for new thrills, or some strange means to urge
Their flaccid nerves to quiver and to surge.
For me—I 'd rather kiss on practised lips,
And seek my feast of honey where it freely drips.

[Embraces LYDIA]

Come, drink—

[Shrieks, sound of arms clashing outside]

Lyd.: [*waves aside cup*]

The wine is poor. It hath no savor . . .
Those plebs die much too loudly . . . . .

[DRUSUS and LYDIA struggle as he endeavors to force her to drink]

Drus.:

What! Darest refuse?
Ho, ho, there, King of Bumpers! Sighs and gloom!
Here 's one who will not drink! Pronounce her doom!

[Laughter, cries of revelers. Enter RUTILIUS]

Rut.:

Drink! Drink! And who to any cup saith "nay,"
Is sealed a poor plebeian thing this day!

Lyd.:

Plebeian—I? Thou liest,—pig-eyed lout!
I am the most patrician of you all!
Gaze well at me, if but thy shifty orb
Can gather in its narrow circle quite
The meaning of my festive, gleaming whole.

These are my hands. Look close! Canst see, in anywise,
The marks of toil on them? No! None! Mine arms
Are shapely, as my form: and my white sheathe,
Is smoother than the rarest silken webs
The wandering hucksters bring us from the fabled lands.
My brow is as a babe's. My slaves attend each whim
That fancy breeds, before it hath full birth.
My dwelling, in a garden by a stream,
Gleams softly, like some jewel in its velvet case.
Not like some common bride am I,—poor cheated maid,—
Who, once conveyed to nuptial joys by torch-armed youths,
Discards her tawny slippers, and her belt,
Thereafter to live on a serf, the sole
Possession of one man: to earn from him
The piteous dole of all she craves he deigns to give.
Aye, doth she earn it: or in household tasks,
Or in forbearance of her master's faults,
Or on the bed of pain, to bear him squalling heirs.
Not such my life! For I am highly placed!
A thousand sweat, that one patrician man
May have his ease. A score of those who have
Such thousands, bring their sorted hoards to me,
To earn my measured smiles for but a single hour!
Patrician men are choice in those with whom
They freely join in privy intercourse;
Yet am I censor more precise of who
May pass my ostium, and press my fevered couch.

The Pontifex, flamines, augurs—aye—
The Consuls, Praetors, Quaestors and those few
Of magistrates, who boast the chair; but those
Have sobbed their eager passion on these breasts,
When they have rightly won my favoring nod.
I stalk abroad disdainful, and my mien
Is one of high concern for far-off things.
I voice my love for who may serve my needs
As doth the candidate patrician, who,
Out on the Forum, seeks the dangling votes
Of gaping artisans, and odorous men
Of dirty trades, whom all his soul and heart
Abhor, e'en while he woos, with smiling lips and eyes.
The priests, with whom I join in sprightly sport,
And gay derision of the various gods,
And goddesses, I greet with solemn poses
At shrines. The toiling mob, from which I spring,
By common ancestry with all, I loathe.
I lie to all with equal face. I take
What is not mine, as favor unto him
Who 's plundered by me. That is hard to learn.
And if, perchance, a lack-wit, here or there,
Presumes to bring to bear against me, or
My ownings, any scribbling in the code,
Like that of all patricians is my privilege
To whisper my distress into the ear
Of some high magistrate, who points, in fat-jowled words,
To the rash suitor, every congruous law,
Which ever causes me to win, and him,
—to lose.
And is not this the final proof that I
Am goddess of patricians, and their very soul?

[Laughter, applause, by revelers]

Drus.:

Hail! Goddess of patricians! Three times hail!

[Enter OPIMIUS, FANNIUS, PONTIFEX, CALPIO, a number of Senators, etc. All, except OPIMIUS, FANNIUS, PONTIFEX, and CALPIO, join the revelers]

Fann.:

My very welcome friends:—within these walls
Find relaxation from the day's events.

Opim.:

Thy words are grateful.

Pont.:

Here is gay repose.

[Commotion, sounds of arms. Shouts of "*Halt! Halt!*" Enter plebeian, running, pursued by armed men. Throws himself at FANNIUS' feet]

Pleb.:

My lord! My lord!

Fann.:

What means this turbulence?

Pleb.:

They seek to slay me, who have done no ill!

Fann.:

Who art thou?

Pleb.:

But a Roman citizen,
Whom, through a grievous and unjust mistake,
The soldiers deem one of the Gracchus' men.

Fann.:

Which thou art not?

Pleb.:

I swear it! Oh, I swear!
By all the gathered gods! I am for thee, and thine,
And all against that sacrilegious rogue!
Recall! I swayed the throng for thee this morning!
Wherefore, I 've raced to gain thy sheltering roof.

Fann.:

So? Stand—

[Plebeian rises, slowly]

Drus.:

What ho—whom have we here? It is—
Yea! So it is! The embassy! My lord—

Fann.:

Aye, now I know him. 'T is the filthy swine
Who spurned my proffered bribe.

Pont.:

Refused thy bribe?

Fann.:

He did. I held him out ten silver coins,
And asked him but to cry me "Hail!"

Pont.:

And he?

Fann.:

Refused me.

Pont.:

O, the godless man!

Pleb.: [*kneeling*]

Sweet lord,—
That was before that murderous wretch—that crime-sink
Called Gracchus—had murdered so wickedly:
Since when, I've shouted: "Death to Gracchus, friends!"
And have urged on all good men to do likewise!

Fann.:

Hast altered in thy mind?

Pleb.:

Yea, that I have:
For, when I pondered on that felon's vileness—

Fann.:

Ah—so—didst ponder?

Pleb.:

That I did, my lord.

Fann.:

And didst thy noddle agitate with thought?

Pleb.:

Lord,—fully: as the dread event required.

Fann.:

Then there 's thy fault! Plebeians should not think!
Their business is to labor, and be thankful
That we, who 're set far over them, indulge
Their hunger of some kindness, now and then.

[Signs to guards with hand, thumb turned upward]

Go, fix this fellow so he 'll think no more.

[Guards drag plebeian outward]

Pont.:

Each god who sits on high, feels horror's shrink,
At sight of these plebeian dogs who think!

Pleb.:

But I assert my loyalty, my lord,
And "Hail to Fannius!" shall cry right well!

Fann.:

I trust thee. Go! Go make that noise in hell!

Pleb.:

Lord Consul! Law! Law! Justice! Give me law!
I am a Roman! Give me Roman law!

[Throws himself at OPIMIUS' feet. Enter RUTILIUS]

Rut.:

What show is here?

Drus.:

A cockroach, fighting gods!

Opim.:

What is thy prayer?

Pleb.:

I am condemned untried!
I am unheard! I call for jurors, trial!
I am a Roman!

Opim.:

Right! Shalt have them all!

Fann.:
My lord!

Pleb.:
O gods!

Drus.:
What?

Opim.:
I have said. The law
Saith plainly there shall be a full account
Of charge and answer, trial and verdict, and
Of sentence,—execution,—all in turn.
He shall have every form of this. He must!
Ho! Scribe!

[Scribe approaches, with tablets]

Make note that a full history
Be made, in ancient form, and in the ordered place,
Of all proceedings, questions, answers, yea—
Of learnèd pleas on this small scum's behalf,
And—what hath been decreed.

Fann.:
Which is?

Opim.:
His death.

[*to plebeian*]
Now—die content; the scrolls will show thy trial
In ceremony, as the laws require.

Rut.:
There 's grace!

Pleb.:
Have mercy, lords! Forgive!

Opim.:
What crime?

Pleb.:
I know not.

Opim.:
Lying cur! Go die! Go die!

[Guards start to drag pleb. outward]

Pleb.:

Men! Romans! Brothers! Do not do their will—
These mighty lords—who, though on me today,
Tomorrow will turn on yourselves with death!
O Gracchus, now I understand! These are
The private emperors! Stay, Romans! Stay!
They 're emperors! They 're private kings! Stay! Stay!

Pont.:

That noise!

Drus.:

That rebel noise!

Opim.:

Abate that noise!

[Exit plebeian, dragged by guards. He continues to shout: "*These are the emperors! They 're private kings! Stay! Brothers! Stay! They 're private kings! Stay! Stay! Stay!*" Muffled cry: "*So, ho!*" followed by a thud, is heard]

Fann.:

Well sped! I feared, a moment, wouldst relent.

Opim.:

The hour sounds vengeance: mercy were ill spent.

Rut.:

Why, Calpio, do commons wreak our will
On their own kind, whenever we command?

Calp.:

Because a zany 's born to be a dolt.

Rut.:

Thy wisdom 's not profound.

Calp.:

Nor is an ass.
If these dull plebs had minds with which to think,
Not wine, but sweat, would be patricians' drink.

Rut.:
But there 's the merchant clan: they know,
—they see—
If they should rise to war—

Calp.:
That will not be.

Rut.:
Thou say'st?

Calp.:
I do.

Rut.:
But why?

Calp.:
Because they 're smug.
They ache to be superior: they crave
To glow a bit—e'en though with but a pale
Reflection of what streams from those on high.
The low make boots: patricians wear them; but
The 'twixt-caste licks them.

Rut.:
Io! That 's straight talk!

[Enter Guard]

Guard: [*to Opimius*]
My lord—

Opim.:
Speak.

Guard:
Fulvius' young son returns
As legate, saying he is here to beg thee
For truce, and parley.

Opim.:
What? Again?

Guard:
Again.

Opim.:
This passes credence! Impudence! Just that!
I said "No!" once; yet—see—he dares re-
turn;
Give answer—stay! We 'll send our answer
back

By other lips. His own, that dared to bring
This message to me twice, shall never move again.
I'm understood?

Guard:

Lord—'t is but a purple-togaed boy—
A stripling.

Opim.:

What! Wouldst dare?

Guard:

Lord, I obey.

Opim.:

That 's well.

[Exit Guard]

Septimuleius: thou hast been
A friend of Gracchus?

[SEPTIMULEIUS moves forward, bows]

Sept.:

Friend? No,—not a friend.
He was distasteful to me, ever. I was
A mere acquaintance—hardly that—just one
Who nods in passing—one who barely knows—

Opim.:

Quite so. Now take mine answer to his camp.
The Senate, and Rome's rulers, do not hold
Or parley, or debate, with rebels!
What! Shall the sacredness of High Estate,
Of all authority, and rightful power,
Be smirched by intercourse with such low things,
Such murderous thugs, thieves, robbers, ravishers,
Pledged enemies of order and of state,
As ye, foul gutter-spawn—the blood-marked foes of all,
Both gods and men? Our honor answers: No!
We 'll none of you, except you 're on your knees,
With manacles on hands, and yokes upon your necks!

Fann.:
That sounds magnificent!
Rut.:
And more:—'t is true!
Boyish Voice: [*without*]
Ye dare not! I am sacred! I am here
As herald! O, ye dare not! Murder! Oh!
[Shriek]
Sept.:
But if they do to me as thou hast done to theirs,
And violate my envoy's aegis—what then?
Opim.:
That can not be. 'T is only the exalted,
And those of powerful station who 've the gift to work
Their pleasing will, foregoing the things called laws.
The common hold these sacred in their souls,—
As is but right. Morality must live! Go!
Art safe!
Sept.:
I hope so.
Opim.:
I have told thee. Go!
[Exit SEPTIMULEIUS. OPIMIUS turns to PONTIFEX]
The toil of ruling strains the burdened back.
Pont.:
Care weights the crown with lead. To-night, mayhap,
The Paphian dame will grant me melting ease.
Fann.:
How, now—and have the vestals been unkind?
Pont.:
Those pale lank shadows? Gods! What tasteless joying!
Their passions strive with fears; they yield to weep;

And make a nuptial night a fearsome thing
Of half fulfilled desires. Now, lead me on
To frank delight.

Rut.:

This is its temple! Come!

[PONTIFEX and RUTILIUS mix with revelers]

Opim.: [*to Lydia*]

'T is Lydia! Hail enchantress!

Lyd.:

Consul, thine!

Opim.:

Would that the Fates endowed me with a fair,
Who had this Lydia's charms, and grace, and air.

[DRUSUS leaves couch, and joins FANNIUS and OPIMIUS]

Drus.:

Shouldst have a servant who will tend thy wants,
As hath our Fannius, in Calpio.

Calp.: [*aside*]

My name hath reached his tongue!

[Edges over behind curtain, near FANNIUS, OPIMIUS, and DRUSUS]

Fann.:

Aye—Calpio serves me well.

Drus.:

Dost trust him—much?

Fann.:

He is my faithful slave.

Drus.:

He is a ghost.

Fann.:

A ghost?

Drus.:

Naught else, my friend:
The ghost of Caius Gracchus' arm.

Opim.:

I 'm dull.

Drus.:

He struck the blow that Gracchus' arm did not,
But which half Rome will swear he did. For me,—
I like not ghosts.

Fann.:

Thy words are freighted full
With ominous portent.

Opim.:

Speak thy meaning plain.

Drus.:

There 's sometimes service that creates a debt
Too great for man to owe.

Fann.:

I can reward—

Drus.:

Hast such reward, that, of its biting force,
The slave's remembrance will be mined, and cleared,
Of all its lode of dubious service done for thee?

Fann.:

Were he to dare to treason—

Drus.:

'T is not well
To wait for a polluted spot to waft
Mephitic air abroad, ere 't is removed.

Opim.:

Thy mind inclines to stilly tongues, and eyes
That, having seen too much, see on no more?

Drus.:

Hast said.

Fann.: [*after slight pause*]

But I shall miss him, quite. He is
A Sisyphus—that slave. His nimble wit—

Drus.:

May some day turn to plague thee. Have it done.

Fann.:

So shall it be; but swift, and unannounced.
His faith hath earned him that flip of thoughtfulness.
The fear of hurt to come gives greater pain
Than does the stroke itself, laid on amain.
Deem Calpio a corpse.

Opim.:

Now, let 's to sport.
There are some cheerful ladies here, I see?

[Enter RUTILIUS]

Fann.:

Rutilius shall tell thee of their kinds
Of various perfections.

Rut.:

I 'll tell,—and show!
This way, my lord: there are some sprightly ones,
Whose frivoling turns greying flesh to rosy air.
Ho! Slaves! Falernian jugs!

[OPIMIUS and FANNIUS walk off. DRUSUS joins LYDIA, and they walk off. CALPIO emerges from behind curtain. PORTINUS, blood-spattered, GRACCHUS' sword hanging at side, crawls in through window-casement in rear of embrasure; hides behind one of its forward columns. RUTILIUS motions to CALPIO]

[*aside, to Calpio*]
Guard well my little maid!

Calp.: [*aside, to Rutilius*]
I 'll squat upon my haunches, like a dog, sir,
And bark away intruders.

[Exit RUTILIUS. Laughter, cries of revelers]

Calp.:

So, I die,
That these, my masters, may the easier lie?

[Shrieks, clash of arms, outside]

I die as he whose fate my point-thrust sealed;
And in an hour, beyond the voiceless water,
Make my account for slain Antyllius?
What shrieked that Roman? "Do not do their will,
These private emperors, these private kings!"
He was a prophet, then, that squirming Roman pleb?
So shall I die?—As does some silly sheep,
That holds its neck out for the slaughtering blade?
Now, by the gods,—a slave would die like that;
But I—I 'm slave no more. I 'll be a man,
And die, mine arms in hand, as warriors die;
Or,—if my senses serve,—then those at play.

[Approaches LICINIA. PORTINUS creeps around column, so as to be in CALPIO'S rear; crouches, and makes as if to spring on him]

Fair madam—

Lic.:

Hence,—foul slave!

Calp.:

Be not so rash.

Lic.:

'T was thou enticed me from my guarded home
By thy deceitful, perjured tale of him—
My Caius—saying that he bid me thence:
And didst conduct me to this horror—thou—

Calp.:

I served a master whom I 'd serve no more.
Who lays a path, knows well its windings back.
Belike, I 'll bring thee cure, who brought thee ill.
Thy father hath some power?

Lic.:

In his walls,
Security awaits me.

Calp.:

And if I
Should bring thee thither?

Lic.:

Art in earnest?

Calp.:

Aye,
As I have never been in all my days.

Lic.:

Shalt have asylum.

Calp.:

Swear it by the god
Thou hallowest supreme within thy soul;
And that I 'll have the gold, and needful artifice, to flee.
There is a far-off air I long to breathe—
A sky I yearn to see . . . . There is a distant strand
That calls and draws me . . . Ah—my native land! . . . .
Swear, lady: and I 'll aid thee—with wit, and heart, and hand!

Lic.:

I swear it by mine husband's name!

Calp.:

Enough!
I serve thee on that score.

[Cuts her bonds. Enter RUTILIUS, main setting]

Rut.:

I 'll steal away,
And take possession of my lovely maid;
I 'll wrest from her the pleasure she hath gainsaid.
O ecstacy!

[Laughter and shouts of revelers. RUTILIUS enters embrasure, where CALPIO is removing LICINIA's bonds]

Ha, slave! How now? What 's this?

Lic.:

Dear Juno, save!

[PORTINUS springs, landing on RUTILIUS' back, arms clasped about his neck. After an instant of astonished pause, CALPIO runs forward and draws sword, hanging in its scabbard, at PORTINUS' side]

Calp.:

Strike in the throat! So silence wins with death!

[Stabs RUTILIUS, who falls]

Lic.:

Portinus!

Port.:

Helia—where—

Calp.:

What—

Port.:

She 's here—
In Fannius' house. The soldier gave his name.
The daughter of Antyllius! Where? Where?

Calp.:

In yon cubiculum, this carrion
Had stored the maid against his pleasure's use.

Port.:

Unharmed?

Calp.:

Unharmed.

Port.:

I 'll go—

Calp.:

Await me here!
I 'll forge her passage with a jibe, whom thou
Couldst not withdraw unhelped by half of Rome.

[Exit CALPIO, to side of embrasure]

Lic.:

Good friend—

Port.: [*kneels, kisses her hand*]
Fair mistress . . . .

Lic.:
News of him?

Port.: [*makes gesture of grief*]
Eheu!

Lic.:
The world is dead . . . . That men should say that there are gods!

[LICINIA covers her face with mantle. PORTINUS disengages sword, wipes it, presents it to LICINIA]

Port.:
The master's, lady.

Lic.: [*kisses sword, hands it back to Portinus*]
Wear it nobly, thou.

[PORTINUS takes sword, kisses the blade. Enter CALPIO at side of embrasure, with HELIA; she starts to run to PORTINUS; halts; LICINIA holds out her arms; HELIA goes to her embrace]

Lic.: [*points to Portinus*]
He 's worthy, faithful.

Port.:
Helia! My love!

[Embraces HELIA]

Calp.: [*takes sword from Portinus*]
Good sickle! Prince of harvesters! . . . . . .
Patricians die!
They die as dead as commons; their evil use dies with them . . . . .
So must it ever be when laws are vain,
And justice is the supple bawd of wealth:
The slave will try those who oppress, at will,

Call hunger for his witness, and with arm
Made steadfast by its leanness, strike to win!

[Exeunt CALPIO, LICINIA, HELIA, PORTINUS]

Voice: [*without*]
Halt! Stand!

Calp.: [*without*]
I 'm Calpio, who move to do
Our lord's behest.

Voice: [*without*]
O—thou?—Pass on. But these?

Calp.: [*without*]
With me; time presses.

Voice: [*without*]
Pass. All 's well.

Calp.: [*without*]
Most well.

[Enter DRUSUS, LYDIA]

Drus.:
Ho, King of Wine! We wait thee!

Lyd.:
He hath slunk away
To joust with his unwilling virgin.

Drus.:
So?
By Bacchus! Our becrowned demeans him ill
To hie off to his pleasures, ere the folk
Have had his bounty's overflowing liquid fill.

[Laughter, cries by revelers: "*The King of Wine! Ho, ho, the King of Wine!*"]

I go to seek the amorous monarch, though
I find him on his nuptial couch.

Lyd.:

I trow,
I 'll join thee in the pilgrimage, good sir.

[Laughter, cries of revelers. DRUSUS and LYDIA enter embrasure]

Drus.:

Pshaw, to what lowly state our King is sunk!

[Touches body with foot]

The nasty youngster 's very, very drunk.

Lyd.: [*bends over corpse, rises*]

His sleep is dreamless . . . . He will dream no more . . . .

Drus.:

Thine eye is sharp . . . Here 's death, and puzzling doubt.
Thought, motion, power, station:—flown through a pin-prick;
What 's left—a horrible stranger! . . . .
How? When? By whose clenched hand? . . . . The ordered round
Of life in this great mansion checks its settled race;
And, in an instant, takes new course. Here 's woe
For Fannius. He loses. Elsewhere, someone
May gain . . . . A moment more, and all the joy
That now seethes blithely in yon room, will chill,
And startled silence reign there in its stead.
Thus, while we play, and plan, and chouse, and shout,
Death breathes its chill, and puts us all to rout.

Lyd.:

His gore . . . . See how it creeps . . . . I fear! . . . I fear! . . . .

Drus.:

'T is time t' alarm! Ho! Murder! Murder! Murder!
Rutilius is slain! Murder! Murder!

[Shouts by revelers: "*Murder! Rutilius slain!*" Followed by complete silence. Enter FANNIUS, followed by OPIMIUS, PONTIFEX, Senators, etc.]

Fann.:

What—did—I—hear?

Curtain

ACT V

SCENE FIRST—*Grove of the Furies**

[Night. Outlines of Rome in background. The action takes place in semi-obscurity. After the exit of ALECTA and MEGAERA,** torch-lights gleam in the distance at various points, continually showing closer. Sound of wailing wind]

Alec.:

A-ee! The air grows rank!

Meg.:

Hai! Some one comes
Who wafts a strange, new taint, that moves me ill.
He 's honest, and his body breathes out love.
O noxious smell!

Alec.:

It makes my claws to droop.

Meg.:

There 's one with him who serves, who holds no envy
Within his breast. Pah! Pah!

Alec.:

They seek a covert.

Meg.:

It is denied! Denied!

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* According to some authorities: Grove of Furina.

** The Furies are conceived as follows:—

ALECTA:—bent; shriveled; Medusa-haired; voice is cracked, whining. She is constantly in motion.

MEGAERA:—wan; sparse black hair falling over her face; voice shrill and mocking.

TISIPHONE:—tall; eyes fixed, and staring; scarlet hair, streaming back; voice sonorous and even-toned.

Alec.:

I 'll send a pregnant bitch,
And two moist snakes, across their paths. My welcome!

Meg.:

And mine! Two honest men! Two battling foes!
By those great globules of Uranus's blood
That gave us birth :—I loathe an honest man!

Alec.:

By leaf and twig, by branch and limb, and then,
By trunk and root, make end of honest men,
Of honest wills, of honest heads and eyes!

Meg.:

Hai-hai, I like the quarrelous pate. I love
The silly, vapid eye, or that of lust;
The muddy, flexless harlot's, or the small
And knowing, crafty eye, or that which stares
As does the fish's cold and baleful ball;
The vulgar, ignorant, and insolent,
Or the evasive, roving, furtive, or
The empty eye, or that which carries in its depth
Sharp, sidling cunning, hot desire, or else
The crouching form of Hatred, wound and coiled,
And ready for the striking leap that brings
Loud Clamor, sobbing Grief, Despair, and wailing dirge.

Alec.:

I fear the eye: it shows too readily
The thought behind, to every learnèd gaze.
It is a traitorous thing—that shining round:
Some day, mayhap, these mortals will attain
To knowledge of its story: men will look
Into each others' eyes to seek therein
For love, and kindliness, and pity, or
The Light of Reason. A-ee—the evil hour!

Meg.:

But so I 've taught their visions, that they balk

To read its tale, or, at the best, but see
Within each glistening orb what they would find there.
So do they gloat on stalwart frames, or those
Whose curved seductions challenge their desires,
On rich habiliments, and pompous airs,
And graces that but varnish villainy.
They drink the beauty of a female's hair,
Or babble of the straightness of a nose;
They sense a whitened skin, an arching brow,
Two pouting lips, a blush, or rounded breasts;
But never look for what is in the eye,
Or—looking—see not. I 've denied them sight!
Hai! So is Misery, our hand-maid, fixed
The sucking, sour habitant of every human home.

Alec.:

Observe! These two come closer! In this copse
Set off to us, and our obscenities,
The Gracchus and his servant sound their way;
So let us end their strivings with this day!

Tis.:

Their fate is sealed by greater hands than ours:
Their paths are ordered by the highest Powers.

Alec.:

But I must have to do with their black doom!
I crave it, crave it!

Meg.:

Yea—and so do I!

Alec.:

Let 's hence, and flap away to work, to work!

Meg.:

Hai!—Let 's to labor! Let 's to human joy!
Here let us spur on greed, and there speed up
The feet that tread on murder's errand. Some
Shall I, with conjured hate, inspire to lust
For sprawling limbs, and drooping jaws, and eyes

That gaze at nothing with a fixed surprise.
Do thou, Alecta, wake each abject thought
To envy, and its train of meanest wants;
So, both, we 'll fan the fires of deadly ire,
And make the Gracchus' final anguish be more dire.

Alec.:

Our sister 's mute. Speak, blood-avenger, speak!
What sullen mood sits regnant on thy tongue?

Tis.:

I read the portent of a nearing death
The price of which will waste mine arm of strokes.
Woe, Rome, that banishest from out thy walls
The loving heart, and graspest hate instead!
Woe, Rome! Woe, city pledged to strife! I see
Cadavers heaped as towers on thy ways,
And lakes of blood, that of my wrath shall well
To score requital for the piteous jet
That soon makes crimson this most dismal wood!*

Alec.:

A-ee—her cup brims full! She hath no need
Of our starveling plots, to feed her bloody lust.

Meg.:

They come. I droop. I faint. This plodding twain,
Who crave no vice, rack all my frame with pain.
Where there 's no wish, Denial sneers in vain!

Alec.:

Elsewhere 's our prey. These freeze my limbs. Away!

[Exeunt ALECTA, MEGAERA]

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*The nullification, by the ruling class, of Gracchus' plan for universal Italian suffrage, finally resulted in the Social War. (B. C. 90-88). Over 200,000 Roman lives were lost on the battlefields, before the patricians yielded, and permitted all the allied Italian nations to have the franchise. In addition, this struggle cost Rome the lives of some 80,000, slaughtered by Mithridates.

Tis.:

Now brace thee, Libra, for the sudden load,
Lest, of its shock, thy beam rive skies and worlds!

[TISIPHONE moves to rear. Enter GRACCHUS, limping, leaning on PHILOCRATES]

Gracch.:

I can no more; my flagging spirit meets
The faggèd flesh, and dully calls the halt.
Here is the end.

Phil.:

Nay, master, let me search
For chariot, or bearers, or some keep,
Where we may still elude the hostile hands.

Gracch.:

'T is vain. Didst note, in that last house-pocked street?
While limping, I besought or horse, or aid:
The populace stood by, and cheered, and laughed,
And urged us on to speed, as if we were
Contending in the games. "Stir faster, thou," they cried,
"Lest thy pursuers win the race!" and shrilled
Their pleasure at the show. So Roma's men
Gave comfort to their Tribune, whom they 'd hailed
Their chosen champion and love the day before.
We flee no more.

Phil.:

And do we yield?

Gracch.:

I yield;
But not to the lust-maddened pack that bays
On every side, and slavers with the bubbling juice

Bred by its taste of triumph. We 'll pass on
Our broken mace to other hands.

Phil.:

We bend
Our steps to Rome and to its magistrates?

Gracch.:

Not I . . . . Not I . . . . Mankind vouchsafes nor law,
Nor justice, to those rash who stake their lives
To make the reign of justice true and firm.
Nor ever, while the sovereignty of lawless gold
Is placed in private hands, for use at private whim,
Will justice be. Such is th' eternal law:
Who have the means to buy, find those who 'll sell.
Nor chairs of state, nor mantles, change the flesh
That craves for what coin brings, and causes man,
The magistrate, or ruler, to make trade
With what his office hath to give, for what, in turn,
Another hath with which to pay. 'T is thus
The blushing cloak of Justice serves to shield
The filthiest crimes of Money; so the fat-pursed
Reap honor from their villainies. Ah—no—
I shall not seek the curia, the lords,
The judges, senators and other puffy trash,
To be the sport of solemn-acting rogues
Who ply the ghastly mummery of forms of law;
I 'll face far graver judges, whom clinking arguments,
And furtive nudgings, do not sway.

Phil.:

Those judges—

Gracch.:
Sit in the depths.

Phil.:
Lord,—not the Three?

Gracch.:
Yea—so.

Phil.:
Ah,—lord—see: Rome will wake to sense at dawn,
And seek thee tenderly, whom it hunts tonight.

Gracch.:
Rome? Rome? That name is sour within my mouth.
The morning's penitence undoes no evil deed
Wrought on the yesternight.

Phil.:
The people are misled.

Gracch.:
'T is they themselves who most mislead themselves,
Who follow blatant words, but balk at thought.

Phil.:
Then move, my lord, to raise the slaves to arms,
And win by force?

Gracch.:
No, no; not that; not that!
What 's gained by gore, is lost in that same flood.
The argosy a bloody tide floats home,
Contracts a canker that soon pits her skin,
Which gapes a thousand mouths, that suck within
The horrid liquor:—turned, at last, her turbid tomb.
The Law! The Law alone can pave the road
By which all men may come to better state;
And Law must come by lawful ways in Rome,
Where citizens may make what laws they will.

Phil.:
The soldiers come still nearer.

Gracch.:

Aye; their spears,
That earn the Roman cash with Roman blood,
Will reach us soon. Pomponius? Trapped, too?

Phil.:

He stood with good Licinius, and fought,
To gain thee way. And so they died.

Gracch.:

Loved friends!
I shall not lag . . . My ciphered tale is told.
Yet, would I once again enfold in these
Still sensuous arms my mother's form, and kiss
Those sweet, firm lips, that taught me honor as a child;
Ah—once again I would hold close my lady,
And read love's ever-wondrous tale within her eyes.
And him—my prattling boy—gods—there is pain!
Farewell, good mother—thou, Licinia—
To thee a long farewell. Here is the end . . . .
Philocrates—come—be my savior, thou.
Help! Free me from my bondage with thy sword!

Phil.:

Dear master—I? Loved master—I? Nay! Nay!

Gracch.:

Thine arm is cunning: pet me with its skill.
So shall we cheat Rome's masters of their sport.

Voice: [*in distance*]

Track! Track!

Tis.:

Woe to thee, Rome!

Gracch.:

What sound was that?

Phil.:

The hirelings'?

Gracch.:

Nay, 't was one more near,—a voice
Of sombre import, but of baffling pitch.

Phil.:

I heard none other.

Gracch.:

None, mayhap, heard I.

Voice: [*nearer*]

Track! Track!

Phil.:

The pikemen come!

Gracch.:

Strike swiftly, friend!

Phil.:

Sweet master: will to live, and not to die!

Gracch.:

I died upon the Rostra, on this morn.

Phil.:

Dear master: 't is thy fancy: thou art whole;
Speak not of death, who still art ruddy-hued.

Gracch.:

Wouldst edge from death? Mayhap it is the gate
That leads to wider worlds, and worthier life?
Who knows? For certain, none. Yet something stirs
In universal nature that proclaims
A seethe of things about us, which our dull
And puny talents fail to know, or even sense.
Sounds wing we hear not; beauteous colors gleam
That pass our stare unnoticed; and the feel
Of something nameless tells me, all about
Substantial motion fills the ambient space,
Where sentient beings strive t' appointed ends.

Phil.:

Dost speak of ghosts, my lord, who flit around,
In aimless quest of mischief, in the void?
'T is those I fear,—and dread to share their fate!

Gracch.:

There are no voids. Each point is planned and laid.
Nor are there ghosts, that flutter, uncontrolled,
In wasteful wandering. Purpose fills all space,
The sense of which mere mortals may not know;
But I 'm so drawn to that most veiled of secrets,
That near I 'm joyed to know my spirit's eyes
Will soon feed freely on its shroudless meaning.

Phil.:

So, art resolved—

Gracch.:

To reach that state this day.
The narrow wicket of the grave 's the way.

Phil.:

The grave's a cold, and dank, and cheerless bed;
O master,—face the hardships, for the sun!

Gracch.:

Shall crumbled ashes flame with primal fire,
Or wasted vessels spout their wine anew?

[Turns aside, and gazes upward]

Eternal Power, whose compelling mind
Rules all that is, and makes all things to be:
Bear witness that I do not die to flee
Untoward happenings, or cruel wrongs.
Soughed but a whisper in me that said "Live!"
I 'd hold my life—lead to what stifling depths its course;
But, what 's my spirit yields to thy command
To strive no more on earth; for which I die.
The spark that yesterday blazed hot within,
And urged to combat in the fated cause,
Now glows no longer; what throbbed high, lies flat.
For which I loathe this carcass, feigning life,

Whose every movement marks a ghastly mock
Of what was once an instrument divine.

Voice: [*sounding nearer*]
Track! Track!
Phil.:
They come! They come!
Tis.:
Woe, Rome! Woe, Rome!
Gracch.:
What voice was that?
Phil.:
Our hunters'.
Gracch.:
Nay, not so.
The air bends back in shuddering retreat,
And tortures in mine ears with eerie waves,
That are not born of mortal throat.
Phil.:
None speak
But thou, and I.
Gracch.:
Dost say? Mayhap 't is so . . .
Now strike!
Phil.:
To spill thy gore—good master—nay!
My sword would turn within the stroke to curse me!
Gracch.:
Though thine the arm, 't is Rome's behest that kills.
Of thee 't is kindness: all the evil 's hers.

Voice: [*growing nearer*]
Track! Track!
Phil.:
They come!
Tis.:
Woe grasps thee, witless Rome!

Gracch.:

Again! . . . . .

[Turns toward TISIPHONE]

I see thee, glorious Thing of Dread!
I see thee, living, who should see thee dead!

[Turns to PHILOCRATES]

Philocrates! Thy sword! Strike! I command!

Phil.:

Thy will! Mine arm! O gods!

Gracch.: [*covers his head with cloak*]

Strike!

Phil.:

Strike? I 've struck!

[Stabs GRACCHUS, who falls. PHILOCRATES drops on his knees, head buried in hands. Low roll of thunder, murmur of many voices, indistinct groans, gross laughter, stifled shrieks, which die away as TISIPHONE speaks]

Tis.:

Doom 's struck! Weep, Rome! Drink, ever-thirsting sword!
Halt, Chaos! Wither thy lascivious reach!
On high, still Justice holds th' all-weighing scales,
That sway to every paltry insect's drone,
And cant for gods and bondmen with like speed.
To her stern service flies my flaming will!
Soon to that balance these, mine arms, will sweep
An ocean of hot tears, vast stores of pain,
High mountains of sleek corpses, gathered from
Rome's darlings of soft ease, and from those low

Who 've served their bloody ends in this most foul event!
Such the amends that shall make smooth th' account!
Tisiphone hath spoken! Note it, gods!

[Exit TISIPHONE]

Phil.:

Sweet Caius Gracchus, parable of worth,
Thou norm of honor, greatest of the sons
The gods have given Rome :—what low, rank tale
Will rumor sow of thee in all the days to come?
The lion dead, the meanest cur may bite;
The giant gyved, a dwarf will dare to fight;
Let lightning fell the towering oak, and then—
'T is kindling wood for the most sleazy men.
When greatness crashes, at the Fates' commands,
A myriad lousy knaves clap eager hands,
And spit the venom of their envy's hate,
In base inventions, that their spites create,
From out their vicious longings, to lay store
Of fell abominations at its door:
Each seeks some notice for his abject squeak
By tagging what was great with his own reek :
And finding listening ears, where Fame hath not,
Impress on shining lives their poison's blot.
So, filthy tongues, that reach from sewers' slime,
Proclaim high minds as ministers of crime,
And out of mouths unfit to breathe a name,
Its memory 's consigned to lasting evil fame.

Voice: [*nearer*]

Track! Track! I see the track!

Phil.:

Now am I master here, and, of my will,
Can choose my course and order my next step

As gives me pleasure. Caius Gracchus dead,
And I—his soldier—living! O ye mooning
Fates,—
What foolish play is here! See—on this
blade—
'T is Caius Gracchus' blood that slowly flows!
Thou sacred ichor! Precious ruby drops!
Mysterious fluid, that, a moment since,
Coursed love, and pregnant thought in yonder
corpse:
Come to my heart, and mingle with its stream!
So may Philocrates hold Gracchus in himself,
And may unite some atom of his worth
With this, his humble servant, who, at once,
Will grow blood-brother to this hero-god!
I shared thy life:—my chief, my master,
friend—

[Stabs himself]

O sacred joy,—to share thine own life's end!

[Dies.
Silence]

Sp. of Tiber.:
Hast tarried long, my Caius.

Sp. of Caius:
I 'm in pain!

Sp. of Tiber.:
That quickly passes: now thine essence clears
From what hath held its thrill.

Sp. of Caius:
I suffer, still.

Sp. of Tiber.:
There—now—art—free—

Sp. of Caius:
Tiberius?

Sp. of Tiber.:
'T is I.

Sp. of Caius:

All 's strange, I 'm light. Sweet brother, am I dead?

Sp. of Tiber.:

Art dead to Rome, and to that futile swarm
Of sodden things that peoples all its hills.

Sp. of Caius:

And now, there 's peace?

Sp. of Tiber.:

Aye, that;—the peace of toil,
Which thou and I take up again as one;
Toil everlasting, and its sweet reward
Of other toil. Such is the Fates' decree.
The universe is toil, and thou, and I,
Are of its spirits bidden, in our time,
Again, and yet again, now here, now there,
To come, to labor and to die, and rise,
And strive—and strive again. In prison cell and pyre,
In stock and chain, on cross, and on the rack,
Our mortal bodies still must coil and writhe,
That of those horrors souls may part and grow
To habitate those soulless things below,
Who curse at reason, and raise up as great
Those who deny mankind its proper state.
For, so 't was ordered on th' initial day:
Upon men's drooping heads, Hate foots its way;
Love finds its thorny path where'er it may.

Sp. of Caius:

Ah! Radiant morn!—I see celestial light!

Sp. of Tiber.:

Away—away—away beyond the night!

[Silence. Enter, slowly, soldiers,—some bearing torches]

First Sold.:
They 've cheated us; they 're dead.

Second Sold.:
We are too late.

First Sold.:
It was our evil fortune, and their fate.

[Enter SEPTIMULEIUS]

Sept.:
So, thou art loser, Gracchus, after all? . . . . .
I 'll take what profit offers from thy fall.
Come, men,—his head! Our Senate chiefs await,
To weigh its bulk, that once outweighed the Roman state.

[Draws sword, and approaches body, which soldiers surround]

Curtain

SCENE SECOND—*Day—Road to Rome*

[Enter SEPTIMULEIUS, followed by citizen, bearing sack]

Sept.:

Stay here, while I go forward to make sure
My road, and of an escort.

Cit.:

Aye, my lord.

[Exit SEPTIMULEIUS. Citizen puts down bag, sits. Mops his brow]

Heigh-ho—the day comes warm.

[Enter CALPIO, disguised]

Calp.:

Good Roman, hail!

Cit.:

Fair day to thee.

Calp.:

Hast aught to sell? Some food?
A cabbage—cheese—some lettuce heads, perhaps?

Cit.:

I carry but one head.

Calp.:

That is not much.

Cit.:

Not much this morning, yet last night it was
A most important head; and on this morn,
Shorn from its native stalk, 't is said 't hath gained
A high advance in worth.

Calp.:

Am I a fool
To have such stories told me?

Cit.:

What thou art
Is naught to me, good friend; yet do I say:
Here 's value now, in gold, a dozen-fold,
More than there was last night.

Calp.:

What bearest thou?

Cit.:

The head of Caius Gracchus.

Calp.:

Gracchus?

Cit.:

Aye.

Calp.:

And how 's its value raised?

Cit.:

Why, see thee here!
The Consul hath offered all its weight in gold,
Whereon its weight 's no more of bone and greys,
But bone and lead instead.

Calp.:

Thy master 's wise.

Cit.:

He 's more. He 's shrewd.

Calp.:

But of this Gracchus,—say—
What manner man was he? Dost know? I 've heard—

Cit.:

Not half what I could tell thee, warrant thee;
For who should know, if not the man who bears
His head for weighing?

Calp.:

True; and he, thou sayst—

Cit.:

Was a most evil rogue: defied our state,
Our sacred Senate, all our judges; and
Indeed, the gods themselves!

Calp.:

So I have heard—

Cit.:

Say not hast heard, as something from afar:
I tell it thee, who bear his head.

Calp.:

That's sense.
What did he seek for, truly?

Cit.:

Who shall say
What foul design was in his heart—or in his head?
But this all men are sure on: that he was
The enemy of Rome. Why, think on't, traveler:
He sought to lead us honest men astray
In evil ways, by vicious pleas for changes.
He sought—he sought most wicked, horrible things:
T' oppress the high, to raise the plebs to power—

Calp.:

He was a danger—he—; 't is well he's dead.

Cit.:

So men of substance say. Now—Rome's secure!

Calp.:

Pray to the gods that state may long endure.

[Enter SEPTIMULEIUS, with guards]

Sept.:

Come, creature, walk!

Cit.:

Aye, honorable lord.

Calp.:

Speed on, my friend, in safety.

[Exeunt SEPTIMULEIUS and guards]

Cit.: [*walks off, with sack*]

Many thanks.
Who serves the state, as I, in honored toil,
Hath naught to fear on Roma's sacred soil.
I bear a rebel's head upon my back,
But what my shoulders hold, none will attack.

Calp.:

So, Caius Gracchus' head, encased in rags,
Returns to Rome, its god become its jest!
Thou evil place! I spit on thee, proud Rome—
Thou nest of rogues and fools! The rogues on high,
The fools, who for those rogues toil, fight and die:
Whose souls are appetites, whose minds are lust,
And for whose pleasures worlds are ground to dust!

Curtain

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AUTHOR
Caius Gracchus
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